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of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 21 October 2015

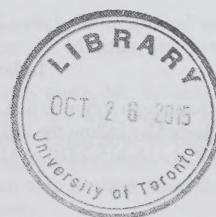
Mercredi 21 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 21 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 21 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Jeff Leal: Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased that the Montreal Canadiens are on a 7-0 streak right now, which is great.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Monday, November 2, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Wednesday, November 4, 2015, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., in Toronto for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 112:

—That notice of public hearings be posted on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

—That the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Thursday, October 29, 2015; and

—That witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

—That each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

—That the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Wednesday, November 4, 2015; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, November 16, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. and Wednesday, November 18, 2015, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

That on Monday, November 16, 2015, at 5 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Thursday, November 19, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister Leal has moved government order number 41. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say good morning to my wife, Karan; my son, Braden; and daughter, Shanae. Right now we have a group of 25 French-language students from Paris visiting our community, and we've been able to show them that wonderful Peterborough hospitality.

Our government is strengthening and enhancing the capabilities of the Ontario Energy Board in order to further protect electricity ratepayers by boosting consumer protection and improving the ability to ensure the continuity of service.

Bill 112 proposes legislative enhancements to the Ontario Energy Board Act, OEBA, and the Energy Consumer Protection Act, ECPA. These enhancements include the following key elements:

—increasing consumer protection by amending the ECPA, including banning door-to-door sales—and frankly, I know that a number of senior citizens right across the province will be thankful for this measure;

—improving consumer advocacy through processes that give consumers a direct voice in the OEB proceedings, including enabling the cabinet to set requirements;

—reinforcing the OEB's ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service to all customers in Ontario in the event of a failing transmitter or distributor;

—enhancing the OEB's ability to levy penalties for non-compliant activities—very important, Mr. Speaker;

—strengthening the OEB's oversight of utility transactions and structures;

—clarifying relationships among local distribution companies and their affiliates; and

—providing tools to cabinet to ensure that critical transmission infrastructure is built.

Our government is committed to putting energy consumers first. We are introducing legislation to strengthen and enhance the Ontario Energy Board's role to ensure it continues to have a robust set of tools to regulate the energy sector and, indeed, protect consumers. If passed, these changes would provide the OEB with stronger compliance and enforcement powers by: increasing the penalties that could be levied against companies that are not complying with the OEB's legislation, rules and directions; enhancing ability to ensure reliability and continuity of service if distribution or transmission companies are unable to fulfill their licence obligations; and enhanced oversight for ensuring best practices on utility consolidation activities. If passed, this legislation would enable the OEB to give consumers a stronger voice in OEB hearings and proceedings—a very important requirement.

It is urgent—very urgent—that we pass this bill so that the government can provide better protections for consumers now. I'm sure all parties can agree that there's an urgent need for these stronger consumer protections. All parties have stated in the Legislature that they will be supporting this bill in second reading. During second reading debate, the honourable gentleman from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke stated, "I do want to say that we're going to support this legislation." The honourable gentleman from Windsor–Tecumseh stated, "This is legislation that at the heart has a good intent. I think on this side of the House we will be supporting it." With all parties' support for second reading, it's now time we move forward with Bill 112 and bring it before committee.

0910

I was at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough last week, having the opportunity to have lunch with a number of my friends, and this bill was at the top of their discussion. They were telling me, "Bill 112 has got to get through the House," and I said, "Charlie, I will guarantee that this will happen." Then we went on and had a great breakfast.

With all-party support for second reading—this is what they're interested in at the East City Coffee Shop—

it's now time that we move forward with Bill 112 and bring it before a committee. In the last Parliament, this Legislature was ground to a halt and wasn't able to move forward. Only 39% of government bills were passed in the last minority government. That's compared to more than three quarters of the bills that were passed going back to 1990. The voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June. They wanted your government—our government—to get on with the business of governing in their best interests.

There has been considerable debate on this bill and the ideas of the bill, and we've heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives—even from the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough. It is time that we had second reading and referred this bill to committee. In committee, stakeholders will present their views; we'll be able to hear directly from the public their thoughts on this bill. In committee, members will have the opportunity to move amendments to the bill—I know this is important in Barry's Bay. At the same time, this House could move to a substantive debate on other matters.

There are a number of important pieces of legislation that we've already introduced, which the government would like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process. I know that on Friday, when I'm at the East City Coffee Shop, the boys will be interested in Bill 85, the good government act; Bill 109, the employment and labour statutes act; Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act; and Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act. We'd like to spend time debating the other important pieces of legislation currently before the House, but we cannot until Bill 112 is dealt with. I urge all members on all sides of this House to support this motion and help pass this bill as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Wow, I've got to visit that coffee shop and see what they're serving besides coffee. He has been drinking something that ain't coffee. It's Liberal Kool-Aid, and he has overdosed on it. He's wild this morning. He has overdosed on Liberal Kool-Aid. Let's just think about what he said: There has been ample debate on this bill.

First of all, let's start out by making it very clear that we're supporting the bill. That's not the point. We have members in this House who want to speak to that bill. He talks about how important this bill is. Then why do we not have the ability to speak to it? Do you realize, Speaker, that in the Progressive Conservative opposition here, we have actually had three members get to speak to this bill: myself, as one of them, Mr. Walker and Mr. McNaughton—or the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. Three members of this caucus got to speak to this bill.

It is an issue that is important to the people in our ridings. Consumer protection involves every one of us. We all care about it. We have our thoughts on it, and we have input from our residents on this bill. That's what we do in this House: debate legislation. But once again the

party of the guillotine has moved to stifle debate and shut down this House, shut down democracy. Three of 27 members got to speak to this bill.

Now, a good number of Liberals spoke to the bill, because they have a new strategy. It's called speed debating, or stand up, burp, sit down. Stand up, burp, sit down: That's about what has happened with the Liberals on this bill. They get up and say, "Hi. I'm supporting the bill. Let's move on." Then the House leader will stand up and say, "We've had 27"—35 or whatever—"of our members speak to this bill." They haven't really spoken to it. They've announced a few of the talking points, and then they figure debate should be over.

There are some issues involved in this bill. There are some concerns with regard to amendments. And then the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs—

Hon. Jeff Leal: And food.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Well, you'd better be careful of what you're adding to your food because it's affecting your judgment.

He gets up and now he talks about how we're going to have committee on this bill. Right. We're going to have committee on this bill for four hours one day—on Monday, November 2, from 2 to 6—and on Wednesday, November 4, from 4 to 6 for the purpose of public hearings. The member says—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm going to get a coffee, John.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, get another coffee. You're probably having withdrawal symptoms.

Interjection: Can you bring me one, Jeff?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is it the east side coffee shop? What is it called?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The east side coffee shop coffee is better.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know that, but what's the name of the coffee shop?

Interjections.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm leaving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I haven't been invited to the coffee shop. I'd like to be in the conversation; it would be nice to go to the coffee shop.

Through me; thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly, Speaker. When I finish the debate, perhaps I can get you a coffee. He's headed to the east gallery coffee shop. I hope they're not adding the same stuff that he's been drinking at the other coffee shop.

Six hours of public hearings. He stands up there and professes with a straight face—actually, it wasn't a straight face. He was actually kind of laughing because he thought it was kind of humorous himself that there is going to be ample ability for the public to comment on this bill.

Interjection: They'll be allowed five minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They'll be allowed five minutes, and it's going to be in a six-hour time period here in Toronto. According to the Liberal government, this is not only the centre of the universe, it is the universe. You know what? There are people elsewhere in the province

of Ontario who would like to have the opportunity to speak to this bill, to speak to the possible amendments that could be made to this bill. But they're not going to get the chance. They're not going to get the chance to speak to it because debate is being shut down by the Liberal majority.

They keep talking about this great majority that the people of Ontario gave them last year. Now, of course, they're all chortling and grinning like the Cheshire cat because they think that now that Justin Trudeau is the Prime Minister of Canada, everything's going to be perfect in the province of Ontario. I can hardly wait for the reaction from Premier Wynne when Justin says, "No, no, no and no." Then, all of a sudden—but we're not going to hear that lament that we've heard for the last 12 years in this House: "We need a strong federal government. We need a federal partner that works with the provinces." We're not going to hear that because they're still in love. Provincial Liberals, federal Liberals: It's going to be a love-in, and we'll never hear any criticism of the federal government anymore.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Get back on topic.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A new age has come to the Legislature of Ontario. There will be no more criticism of the federal government from the provincial government—unbelievable. We'll see how much the world changes.

Let's get back to the bill. Let's get back to the matter at hand.

Hon. Michael Coteau: There we go.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to the minister, we're not speaking, actually, to the bill. You see, this is a motion, not the bill. I want to caution—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He shouldn't be speaking at all, and I should be speaking through you, right?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I couldn't agree with you more, but it doesn't seem to work out that way.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm trying.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're getting better. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaking through you, to the motion, it is a motion for time allocation. It's a fancy name for a motion for shutting down democracy, stifling debate.

Interjection: The guillotine.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The guillotine has fallen once again. The guillotine has fallen on the Ontario Legislature.

If there was even a discussion—as I said, I made very clear, in my opportunity to speak to this bill—and I appreciate the fact that they actually gave us that because, who knows, the next time they bring a bill forward, maybe they'll just ram it through. Oh no, sorry; the standing orders don't allow them just to ram it through. There has to be a minimal amount of debate, and that's what we're getting in this Legislature these days. We're not getting extensive debate where each and every mem-

ber of this Legislature, whether they're the official opposition, the third party or the government members, which—we might as well have one member speak from the government side, because it's just like a record that's skipping: It only lasts about as long as a skip in a record. They get up, say a few words, sit down, and they've participated in debate and they've represented their constituency.

0920

Well, nothing could be further from the truth—nothing, Speaker—because they're not visiting the coffee shops. The only shop they're visiting is the corner office on the second floor. They go by in the morning, punch in the clock and pick up their marching orders. Go in the morning—tchick, tchick—punch in the clock, pick up their marching orders, one dose of Kool-Aid and away you go to the House, and that's what you're going to do for the day. The puppeteer is working hard in the corner office pulling the strings, and all the puppets are here going, "Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full."

What we really need is honest, open, wholesome debate on an issue, and because the province feels Bill 12 is of such importance, it should be incumbent upon them to try to extend the debate for as long as the opposition and the third party deem it is necessary. This is not a place to rush things through. This is a place for careful consideration, so that when a law is passed, it is done right.

My son is training as an apprentice carpenter—

Hon. Jeff Leal: And a good one, too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes, he'll be a good one.

They have an old saying: "Measure twice, cut once." It is a simple saying, but it's so true. Why would you want to cut that piece of lumber before you have ensured that you've got it right? If you cut that two-by-four and you're an eighth of an inch short, well, that thing is going to be a little weak because it ain't gonna fit right.

Interjection: You'll need a new two-by-four.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're going to have to throw it out or use it for something else and get out another two-by-four.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Who's good at that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Liberals are good at that because they're good at wasting.

And not only that. They're here trying to rush this through, but if they get it wrong, is it not possible—and I say this directly through you, Speaker, of course—if they get it wrong, then we'll have to do it over again?

It's your time. It's the time invested by this group, this Legislature. We've got two hours to debate this motion, and I'm trying my level best to use every logical argument I can come up with why this is wrong and why we should allow the people in this Legislature to debate it more fully. If we have it wrong and we haven't given it enough time, then we have done a disservice to the people of Ontario, a disservice to this Legislature. So what would be the crime for us to say: "Whoa, hold on. Let's take another look at this. Let's get the views of some more members of this Legislature"?

I know my colleague from Nipissing, who was also the energy critic before me, also has lots to say about this. He also was the mayor of North Bay. I'm sure that while he was the mayor of North Bay he heard plenty about consumer issues with regard to door-to-door sales on energy contracts. We've all heard about it. If you've been in municipal politics or you've been in provincial politics or you're in federal politics, we've heard about it, because it has been an issue. What would be the big mistake about getting it right?

I look across the floor to my colleague from St. Catharines, and he's like a season ticket holder when it comes to time allocation debates. He never misses a game. If the Blue Jays were on time allocation—and I fear their time might be allocated, but we're all hoping and praying that tonight they can get it right, get the offence going, and also get those pitches painting the corners, making sure that we're getting those calls and that we're not getting hit to death by the Royals. But the member from St. Catharines, I know he loves baseball—he's a sportsman. He loves hockey, he loves baseball, but apparently he loves the sport of guillotine slashing as well.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Loves baseball, loves hockey.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Loves baseball, loves hockey, but what he loves more than anything else is the sport of beheading by the guillotine of the government, the sport of beheading, because that is essentially what we're doing here, Speaker. We are cutting the head off debate, we are cutting the head off the opposition, and we are rendering this a single-party state, and that is wrong. People expect more.

I want to say to the member from St. Catharines—I'm not saying it to him directly, Speaker; I'm saying it through you. I want to say that this conversion to the master executioner, to the man of the knife—you know, there's Mack the Knife. Remember that song, Mack the Knife?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, I don't even know if I can use his name. It doesn't sound quite as good.

He's the man with the knife, and he's going to love his job. If you're going to be an executioner, you'd better love your job, because you're going to have a hard time sleeping at night because that's a tough job. But you know what? He's got to have a hard time sleeping at night as well, with what he's doing with these guillotine motions.

But I say to you, Speaker, that he did not come by that at birth. He did not grow up loving the guillotine. Clearly, it is learned behaviour. You would think that someone of that vintage—and I'm not suggesting he's old. I'm just saying—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no. Speaker, I know—*Interjections.*

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, you know the old saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: That's not true.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, it's not true. You're right, I say to the member from Barrie. She's with us and apparently awake, and look at that.

You can't teach an old dog new tricks? Well, the power of the Kool-Aid of the corner office can even do that. Because you see, the member from St. Catharines used to deplore the use of the guillotine.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Say it's not so, Jim.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no, and I have had my crack research team bring up some statements of the past. When the man from St. Catharines—

Hon. Jeff Leal: The gentleman from St. Catharines.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The gentleman from St. Catharines, the man who has become the guillotine—Dr. Slash—used to believe that the use of the guillotine was wrong. I don't know if these quotes were at the time of the debate over capital—oh, no. My goodness, these debates are not that old. I thought maybe it had something to do with capital punishment, because he's certainly in favour of the capital punishment of debate.

This is a quote from the member from St. Catharines, now the deputy House leader, the most experienced, the most tenured member of this Legislature. You know what? I'm going to tell you, when he was in opposition, some of the things he came out with were valid. I just want to read one of them, if I may. This is from the member from St. Catharines on December 11, 2001. I'm not sure what bill they were debating, but that's the point, Speaker: It's not necessarily the bill itself; it's the idea that this place should be shut down.

"This is indeed an interesting bill, but what's even more interesting right now is the time allocation motion that faces us. For the people who are watching this perhaps on their television sets at home, I should clarify that. That is the choking off of debate, the ending of debate or the government allocating how much time there shall be for the debate on a piece of legislation." He was explaining what was happening here, and he was dead right.

He went on to say, "We are operating in this Legislative Assembly at this time almost exclusively on what are called time allocation motions. That's most unfortunate, because it's what you would call anti-democratic."

0930

Now, I just want to run this by you, in no particular order. This is since the Wynne government won their "big majority." Time-allocated bills:

- Bill 6, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act;
- Bill 7, Better Business Climate Act;
- Bill 8, Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act;
- Bill 10, Child Care Modernization Act;
- Bill 15, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act—how did that work out, boys? Never mind, I won't ask;
- Bill 18, Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act;
- Bill 21, Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act;
- Bill 35, security for courts, electricity blah, blah, blah act;

—Bill 57, Pooled Registered Pension Plans Act;

—Bill 80, Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Amendment Act;

—Bill 91, Building Ontario Up Act—they shouldn't have passed the tearing down Ontario act; oh no, that passed the day you got elected; and

—Bill 103, Protecting the School Year Act.

I'm not even sure if this is a comprehensive list, but that is no less than 12 bills since they came back here in 2014—no less than 12 bills since they came back here in 2014.

We're only asking—and we have to ask; we almost have to plead at the feet of the Queen, because we do not have the legislative authority or the power to compel this government to do anything. We don't. It's the way our parliamentary system works. But we are prepared to plead to change your ways. It is not too late to repent. We will forgive you for your sins if you change your ways and allow this Legislature to do what our forefathers intended it to do, which is to debate legislation. That's what we're asking for: for you to allow the Legislature to do what our forefathers intended it to do. Don't change history because it's a matter of Liberal convenience. Don't affect the future for decades to come. You have the chance to do something right, and I know it hasn't been something that's been at the top of your list, but you can do this right by allowing this Legislature to debate bills until the members have decided that the debate has been exhausted, it is time to move on and we are satisfied that the people of Ontario have had a wholesome debate on this issue.

My colleague Mr. Smith from Prince Edward-Hastings will also be speaking on this issue. I have a strong suspicion that there will be some amendments proposed to this motion, because it's the right thing to do.

I pass to the Chair now, and I thank you for this opportunity, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always a pleasure to be able to rise in this House, but today, not so much. I would like to say that it's always a challenge to follow my colleague from Renfrew-Pembroke-Nipissing, I think?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Close enough.

Mr. John Vanthof: Great speech. On behalf of the NDP caucus, we would like to agree with most of it.

What time allocation is, really, if you think about it, is a failure by the governing party to actually work in a democratic system. That's what time allocation is. Because the way the system is supposed to work is, the government has every right to put forward a bill, and it's the opposition's role to bring forward the comments and changes, or their opposition to the bill, in order to make it better. It's the duty and the responsibility of opposition members to be able to speak to this bill and try to make it better, to try to either change the government's mind on the whole bill, or to try to make improvements. That's our duty.

With time allocation, the government is basically saying, "We know better, and we're going to shut you down." It's especially egregious with this government, who were elected on a pledge of openness and transparency. Time allocation is the exact opposite. It's the exact opposite. As I've said, it's a failure of them to be able to work within a democracy. In a majority government, they should be able to talk to the other parties. There would be some bills that we don't have a problem with, that we could move through the Legislature faster.

There are some bills, as this one—there are some major problems in this bill, and myself and my colleagues will expand on that a bit later in the limited time we have. That's a big problem with time allocation, because they're limiting the time for members to propose changes here in this House. Even more egregious, and perhaps most egregious, is that they're limiting the time of people, everyday people, who should be able to participate in democracy. They're limiting their time by limiting the time of committee hearings and also by limiting where committee meetings are held.

If you look at this bill, Bill 112, it has two main issues; the one issue is door-to-door sales, retail sales of electricity, stuff like that, which we've all had experience with. It's a huge problem, but it's not just a huge problem in downtown Toronto, where these hearings are going to be held. It's a huge problem in one of my colleagues' ridings, Kenora-Rainy River. It's a huge problem in Timiskaming-Cochrane. I'm sure it's a huge problem in ridings across this province. I'm sure people who have dealt with this in ridings across this province would appreciate the opportunity to be able to participate in the process of making a law that is going to help curb this problem.

But this government has decided that, "No, not only are we not going to listen to the opposition, but we're not going to listen to the people who are actually impacted by this." This government is saying, "We know better." They claim to be open and transparent, but deep down they are telling the people of Ontario, "No, we know better." That is perhaps the most egregious thing about time allocation.

This government system, our parliamentary democracy system, has been developed over hundreds of years, and it works. But time allocation is a chip against this parliamentary democracy; it really is. People outside of this House think, "Oh, well, they just want to get things done fast." We're not making breakfast here; we're making laws—laws that stand for years and years; laws that can help people or laws that can hurt people.

Many of my members would like to be able to have the chance to speak to this bill because they have had people who were impacted by door-to-door retail salespeople. Some people don't even know. I'll give a personal example. My mom recently moved to a retirement home, and as we were helping with selling the house and cleaning it out, I discovered that my mom had a door-to-door retail contract and was paying way too much for natural gas, unbeknownst to me, the MPP. I'm sure that happens to people all across the province.

So the more we could talk about this issue and bring this issue out, the better it would be for the people of Ontario. Why couldn't we have a committee hearing in Thunder Bay or in North Bay or in Woodstock or in the Minister of Agriculture's riding in Peterborough? Why couldn't we have committee hearings throughout the province on this issue? Why? Because the government doesn't want to talk about this issue.

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Interjection: Why?

Mr. John Vanthof: Why is that?

What is even more egregious with this bill—believe me, this thing is pretty serious. This bill should really be two bills.

The one side is, "Yes, we're going to do something about door-to-door sales." They're not banning door-to-door sales, by the way. What this bill does—you can't actually sign the contract. Those people can still approach people like my mom and do a fantastic sales job and do a big pressure job. They just can't do the deal on the doorstep. They have to call back. On the other side, where they say this is banning door-to-door sales, it's not.

But there's another part of this bill. This is the part I think they really don't want to talk about, and that's why they're doing everything they can to keep this on the down-low. They're taking some of the Ontario Energy Board's powers away when it comes to transmission. You're saying, "These two things have nothing to with each other," and they don't. That's why this bill is being time-allocated, so they can rush it through without people really figuring out what's going on.

Out there, a lot of people don't pay attention to politics, and sometimes for good reason. But on this one, it's a very important issue. As we all know, the government is talking about—well, they're doing more than talking about it now. The garage sale, the fire sale is starting for Hydro One. They don't want to talk about that either, but this bill has something to do with that. The government keeps saying we're protected by the OEB, the Ontario Energy Board, right? But this bill, while we're talking about protecting consumers, is taking power away from the OEB and putting it into the government. Really, that's the issue.

Yes, we are going to be supporting this bill on second reading, but there have to be some major changes done in this bill for it actually to be a benefit to the people of Ontario.

When they change the rules for transmission—we have people in Ontario who don't have transmission lines going into their communities. The government says, "This will help them." There's no guarantee this will help them. If they privatize Hydro One, how are these people ever going to be guaranteed that someday they will actually be connected to transmission lines?

This bill needs to have a very fulsome discussion, and that's why the government is time-allocating this. They are talking about openness and transparency and how they want to have everyone's input.

I've been an MPP for four years, and I often wonder how it is that the things we should be debating—and the people they should be consulting—we aren't, and the things we don't need to debate, we are. This one, we need to debate. On this one, there should be consultation across the province.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture is here. We're doing culture consultations across the province. I'm not opposed. I think that's a good thing. The more people we consult on issues that impact people across the province, the better it is.

But on the other side, why don't we have consultations on an issue like this one? Why don't we have a committee hearing in somewhere other than Queen's Park? Why? Why is it important for culture yet not important for something that's going to impact people perhaps for generations? That is the contradiction of this place.

That's why time allocation shouldn't be part of our standing orders. Unfortunately, it is, and our party was part of that. I'm not going to deny that. But it was a mistake. For a majority government to have to time-allocate time after time, specifically on bills like this one which have a big impact on people, is shameful.

We can predict that when the contradiction of this bill comes forward, the government will say, "Well, don't these people want to stop door-to-door sales?" Of course we do. But they won't talk about how they're taking away the power of the OEB with this same bill. It's two bills, and they're trying to slip one under. That's very egregious, especially from a government that claims to be open and transparent.

In the short time we have left, some of my colleagues will want to continue on this, so I'll leave the rest of our time to my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise to speak to this important motion. I have a monthly seniors' meeting where we talk about the issues that are important to people in my community, particularly seniors in my community. There are a couple of points I wanted to share with you about that.

The first is that, oftentimes, when I come to those meetings, one of the key questions I get from folks is, "What are you getting done on my behalf? How are you improving the quality of life in our community?" That's one of the questions.

The other thing that recently came up, and I mentioned this before when I spoke to the bill a couple of weeks ago, was that when I told them about some of the things that were in this bill, particularly around banning the door-to-door sales, everybody in the room was nodding their heads and saying, "This is absolutely necessary."

One of the folks asked me after the meeting, "When is this going to get done?" I said to them, "Well, it depends on how long it's debated and how long the legislative process takes." When I think about that and when I think about the fact that the people in that room and the people in my community want to make sure that a lot of other

things also get done to enhance the quality of life for the people of Ontario, I think it's really important that we get to the business of getting things done on behalf of the seniors who were in that room and on behalf of the people of my community and the people of all the communities that we represent.

Let me highlight a few points. The people in that room and the people of Ontario sent us a clear message last June when we were elected that they wanted us to get a lot done. There has been considerable debate on this bill.

I know that the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke spoke about the fact that there were few members on his side who had spoken to the bill. I'm not sure why that is. It can only be one of two reasons: either the members on the opposite side aren't excited about protecting consumers or the members on the opposite side are being prevented from speaking to the bill. Either way, they've had the opportunity to speak to it. In total, there have been 40 members who have spoken to this bill—40—for the member to suggest that there hasn't been an opportunity for the members to speak is not accurate at all. I think we all know that. The Legislature has been working and members have been speaking to this bill.

The other thing I'd like to say is that by moving this on to committee, what this allows is it allows stakeholders to come forward and for the committee to review the bill. There are members from all parties at that committee. They can consider the bill, speak to the bill, ask questions and make it even stronger.

But the best part about this is that we can get to—and we already know that members of the other parties have said they're going to support the bill, so we know what the outcome will be. In fact, we know that. The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke provided some interesting quotes. The quote I'd like to provide is from the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who stated: "I do want to say that we're going to support this legislation...." The member for Windsor—Tecumseh stated, "This is legislation that at the heart has a good intent. I think on this side of the House we will be supporting it." If that's where we're going to go, there is an opportunity here to bring it to committee and make it better, if there are any concerns.

There is an urgent need to protect consumers. The people at those seniors' meetings in my community care about that, the people in my community broadly care about that and the people of Ontario care about that.

0950

The other thing that the people of Ontario want us to work on is a whole range of other issues. There is a number of pieces of legislation that have been introduced which we want to debate and I'm sure the people in our communities would want us to debate and get to work on so that we can get things done on their behalf: Bill 85, the good government act; Bill 109, the employment and labour statute act; Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act; Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act, and I could go on. These are important pieces of legislation

that enhance the lives of Ontarians, of the people in my community of Etobicoke Centre.

Speaker, I started by talking about the people in those seniors' meetings who I meet with on a monthly basis, who tell me how they want us to get things done on their behalf. I got elected to get things done on their behalf.

Let's move this bill along. It's a good bill. All parties support it. Let's keep getting things done for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Let's go, Blue Jays.

In response to that last bit of debate that we heard, that was finely ground pork sausage, in my opinion. A bunch of baloney is what that was.

He talked about the fact that 40 people have spoken to this bill. As the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke pointed out, three people in the official opposition have had the opportunity to speak to Bill 112, amending the Energy Consumer Protection Act, something that's obviously extremely important to the people in Prince Edward–Hastings—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: —and it's important to the people from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, as he just mentioned, and to many members of this Legislature. But they haven't had the opportunity to do their job. The reason they were sent here was to represent them.

We just went through a federal election campaign. You might remember. A lot of you were involved in it. I know your staff were certainly involved in the election campaign that we had, where the federal Liberals were victorious. Throughout that election campaign—and it was 78 days, Mr. Speaker—for 78 days, I heard candidates saying, "I am going to be the voice of"—fill in the riding name—not "the voice of Ottawa in"—fill in the riding name.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Todd Smith: How often did your candidate in Peterborough say that? How often did your candidate in Etobicoke Centre say that? How often did your candidate in—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You gentlemen know what we are to do. Direct it through me.

No more outbursts from the Minister of Agriculture. Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was looking you straight in the eye during that debate.

It is very, very important for us as legislators, as elected members of this Legislature, or for new parliamentarians going to Parliament Hill in Ottawa—it's their job to represent their constituents in these seats and bring their thoughts and feelings to this place on pieces of legislation that are affecting their lives.

That's what members of the official opposition wanted to do on Bill 112. The member from Nipissing was here

this morning. He is the former mayor of North Bay. He's a former energy critic for the Progressive Conservative Party. He had a speech ready to go this morning, to deliver on Bill 112, but suddenly, overnight, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke calls it, the master or the minister of the guillotine decided that he was going to end debate on this bill. The member from Nipissing was going to be stifled; he was going to be muzzled. He wasn't going to have the ability to represent his constituents on the floor here in the Legislature and bring his concerns and their concerns to Queen's Park.

That's not why this place was invented.

We talk about the Blue Jays playing their big playoff game today, game five—must win—against the Kansas City Royals. You know what their job is, those Blue Jays? Their job is to show up at Rogers Centre today. They are going to step into the batter's box, and they're going to look at the first pitch. If the first pitch isn't to their liking, hopefully, they're going to take it. But when it comes time to hit that one down the middle, they're going to take a swing at it. If this Liberal government was running the Blue Jays, they would step into the box, they'd be able to look at one pitch, and they'd be out of there. They would be gone.

Their job is to analyze legislation. Our job is to analyze legislation. The job of the third party members is to come here and represent their constituents and talk about legislation that is before this House that affects their lives. This government is not allowing us to do our jobs here at Queen's Park. They have cut down debate.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke talked earlier about all the pieces of legislation that have been moved to time allocation since the 2014 provincial election. This is the 13th time that a piece of legislation has had a time allocation motion forced on it, right? That means it hasn't had thorough debate here in the Legislature. This is number 13, Bill 112, the Energy Consumer Protection Act.

As we debated earlier, when I believe our critic for energy was talking about this bill in his hour-long presentation, there is a lot of protection needed when it comes to energy for the people of Ontario because of this government. And it's because of hasty decisions that they've made in the past. Look at the Green Energy Act. Many critics have said that George Smitherman wrote that sucker on the back of a napkin, that it was done without any kind of thought or consultation with those who work in the energy sector. And look at the unintended consequences.

I'll give Smitherman the benefit of the doubt. Maybe he really thought that it was going to have an effect on climate change or reducing emissions in Ontario. Maybe that's what he thought it was going to do. That certainly hasn't been what happened. What it did is it drove businesses out of Ontario for other jurisdictions. Smitherman and McGuinty and company came up with the Green Energy Act on the back of a napkin—

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Go ahead, point of order.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I've been listening carefully, but I don't believe that the member is directing his comments to the bill that we're debating.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not a bill, it's a motion.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Would everyone like me to answer, or would you want to answer for me? We'll all be quiet now, won't we?

Thank you for your point of order, but I will point out to you that it is a motion and they are addressing a motion. There is certainly lenience when you're doing a motion.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: This is just for clarity, and I know you did a good job explaining that, but this is a time allocation motion. It's a new member and maybe she doesn't understand, but this is the 13th time that the government has brought in time allocation on a bill, so she should know by now this is a motion talking about stifling debate here in the Legislature, keeping us from bringing the representative views of our constituency here to Queen's Park. It's completely unacceptable what's happening. So I hope, now, that that member from Cambridge can go back to her caucus colleagues and say, "What we're doing is wrong," because if the members for Cambridge—they're getting their three minutes. The members for Cambridge are getting their three minutes on this bill, right? That's what the government is allowing their members to do: speak for three minutes on every piece of legislation so that a member can pop up like a whack-a-mole and say, "We've had 50 people talk to this bill," when really we've had three members of the official opposition and maybe a couple of members of the NDP who have talked to this act, the Energy Consumer Protection Act.

It's not about the bill right now. It's about what the government is doing—as the minister of the guillotine makes his way back into the Legislature. This is what it's all about: cutting down debate, stifling debate, putting up that big black curtain and having things occur behind the curtain that the public isn't supposed to know about. When it comes to the sale of Hydro One, Mr. Speaker, that's all been done behind a big, black curtain. We're getting little bits of information coming out as the prospectus on the IPO comes out. We had the preliminary prospectus that came out about a month ago, but even when they released the preliminary prospectus, what did they do? They did it on a Friday afternoon, going into a long weekend, when there wasn't going to be a whole lot of media attention on it.

They're doing something extremely unpopular. More than 80% of the public has said in public opinion polls that they think it's a bad thing to sell off Hydro One. This government is going to do it because they need the cash. They have a spending addiction; they need the cash. But they're doing it behind closed doors.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's been three or four different times now that the government has had a day where the very unpopular sell-off of Hydro One was going to

make headlines in the province of Ontario, so what did they do at the same time? They talked about beer. They talked about wine. They talked about anything but the Hydro One sale, because they know how unpopular it is and they know how popular suds are. Suds are very popular, especially when it comes to craft beer. So what did they do? They talked about the fact they are going to start selling six-packs of craft beer, or six-packs of beer, in grocery stores.

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As a matter of fact, when Ed Clark, who is the finance minister's training wheels, came along, he announced that they were going to be selling beer in grocery stores. You all remember that big sign that said, "Beer in grocery stores." You know what they did at the same time? They announced that they were selling Hydro One. It didn't say that on the big screen. As a matter of fact, it was almost like it was an afterthought that Hydro One was going to be sold off.

This government likes to put up that curtain. They like to exclude the public. They like to divert attention when they're doing something nefarious, like selling off Hydro One. We know how unpopular that is. Not only are they doing something anti-democratic by shutting down debate on this bill, which is an important bill—energy, obviously, is a big issue in the province of Ontario; the Energy Consumer Protection Act is important to people out there—but selling off Hydro One is actually a bigger deal, and they're keeping that out of the public eye as well.

When it comes to electricity rates, last week, during a constituency week, when a federal election was in its last week, when we were in a week at home, what did the government do? They announced that they're going to be increasing electricity rates by another 8% on the people of Ontario—another 8% on the peak rates. You know what they did? They put out a press release saying that it was 3.4%—very, very misleading, Mr. Speaker, because it's going to cost you about 8% more on your hydro bill. Starting next week, November 1, it's going to cost you more.

These are the kinds of secretive things that are being done. These are the kinds of anti-democratic things that are being done in Ontario, and today is another example of that.

While I have the opportunity now, I would like to move a motion. I move that the paragraph starting "That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill" be struck out and replaced with:

"That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015"; and that the third bullet be struck out and replaced with:

"—That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the subcommittee with a list of requests to appear; and

"—That the members of the subcommittee prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Thursday the 29th, 2015;

“—That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists.”

I would move that motion now, Mr. Speaker. I'll hand it to the page and Michael will take it to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Smith has moved that the paragraph starting “That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill” be struck out and replaced with:

“That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015”; and that the third bullet be struck out and replaced with:

“—That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the subcommittee with a list of requests to appear; and

“—That the members of the subcommittee prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Thursday the 29th, 2015; and

“—That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists.”

Continue debate on the amendment.

Mr. Todd Smith: Hopefully, the government will accept this. This is a small, small motion, a simple motion that hopefully will allow more people the opportunity to speak to this bill.

As was pointed out by a couple of different members earlier this morning who have spoken to this time allocation motion from the government, time to participate for the public is very, very minimal on this bill. There is not a whole lot of opportunity. The only opportunity for the public to participate in this bill—again, the committee portion of this bill, the Energy Consumer Protection Act—the only place where the public can participate is here at Queen's Park. This is a big province. I know the member from the NDP who's spoken already is from northern Ontario, from Timiskaming–Cochrane. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has spoken about the fact that his constituents deserve the right to participate in any changes or feedback on this bill. He's from the Ottawa Valley. I'm from Prince Edward–Hastings in eastern Ontario, and I think that my residents should have the opportunity to speak to this bill.

I would ask that the government consider this motion. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill today in spite of the fact that I won't be able to, it appears, speak in full to the actual act that is being debated because I've had that opportunity removed. But I've enjoyed the opportunity to speak to the motion here this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We'll continue debate on the amendment. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Those of us who just went through that federal election when people across the country voted for change across the country—yet we come here and we find out the Ontario Liberal government is the most resistant to change, the most resistant to fresh ideas and the most resistant to new thoughts, better bills and fresh amendments. The Liberal government of Ontario wants us to cut off debate, shut down debate,

before the real motives behind their bill come to light. That's why we have amendments.

I'd like to think that when I stand in this House, I speak not only for the residents of Windsor–Tecumseh but that I speak on behalf of at least most of the people in our great province. The bill that we were to discuss, Bill 112, that used to have the title of the Energy Consumer Protection Act and the Ontario Energy Board Act, of course, now is on the shelf because not only are we talking about cutting off debate on time allocation; we're talking about amendments to the time allocation. You'd want to stand in this House and ask why: why the government had combined the two bills, and now, without even having an opportunity to discuss that bill, we're talking about time allocation and amendments to the motion on time allocation.

Some of us become skeptics. We don't come here as skeptics but we become very skeptical when we get here because we think that somebody is trying to pull the wool over our eyes. Someone is trying to take away our right to speak, cut off debate and give us time allocation and amendments to time allocation motions. Why do they want to smother debate in this House? Why time allocation bills? You combine a feel-good bill with something that you don't really want to talk about, then you bring in time allocation, and before we even get into that, we talk about the amendments to it.

There were quotes going around earlier about supporting the bill. I think we all support aspects of the bill that would have stopped the door-to-door salesmen up to a point, but then they buried that aspect of it. They highlight that and they want us to talk about stripping away power from the Ontario Energy Board and putting it in the hands of cabinet, asking us to trust the government. If there's anything that the people of Ontario have told us lately, you don't really associate the word “trust” with this Liberal government, going by their actions of late, when you talk about the selling off of Ontario Hydro, for example.

When we talk about the amendment to the motion, that brings us back to the motion on time allocation. We talked about no more signing the deal, but I must say, earlier there was a previous motion—not the time allocation motion, but a bill put forward from our member from Kenora–Rainy River who wanted to do away with, phase out, the selling altogether. Sorry, Speaker.

1010

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Just a reminder to the minister and the member from Essex that his member is speaking, and you guys are shouting across to each other. If you want to talk, take it outside.

Continue.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The part I think they don't want us to talk about is the part that strips away power from the Ontario Energy Board and places it in the hands of cabinet. That's like bringing in time allocation so we can't talk about that; we talk about amendments to that motion.

Speaker, I heard a phrase the other day. I think it was “sugar-coated weasel burger.” Somebody had suggested that when you put the sugar on top of a motion, you want to highlight something that you’re hiding underneath the real meat. That was, when you combine getting away with door-to-door salesmen with stripping away power from the Ontario Energy Board, you end up with a sugar-coated weasel burger.

I was hoping to talk about that today, but I can’t. Instead, we’re talking about time allocation and the amendment to that motion. That’s all very interesting.

Last week, Speaker, I had a young woman from—Angela Thompson was her name. She came all the way down from St. Thomas to visit me in my Windsor office to talk about the selling off of Ontario hydro. I was hoping to talk about her today. She works in a group home and her boyfriend runs a small business. She’s reaching out to MPPs of all political stripes because she’s outraged and appalled because this government is selling Hydro One. I think she’d be outraged and appalled that they’re bringing in time allocation on this bill, making this a motion and an amendment to the motion that we have to talk about today.

She told me she thought the Liberal government, which wants us to trust it, was being “really sneaky,” in her words, and “untruthful,” in her words. She took a day off work to come down to my office to drive home the point that while we make it sound positive to use words like “broaden the ownership,” those words disguise the negative reality of the Liberals trying to sell hydro. I only mention that because she did drive all the way down from St. Thomas. She felt tricked; she felt taken in. I feel the same way when they bring in time allocation motions. I just feel as Angela Thompson did.

She also told me she tried to get an appointment with the member from London North Centre, the Deputy Premier, Ms. Matthews. My door is always open, but, apparently, if you want to see certain members of the House, you have to apply online and go through a screening process before you get in the door. I didn’t know about that. I don’t know if it’s true, but she told me that she can’t get in to see the member because she doesn’t pass, I guess, the test. That might be a member’s way of saying “Get off my porch.” I don’t know, but I know, when people come into my office, we have an open-door policy. We don’t always agree with everyone who comes in, but at least we give them the time they need to state their case.

In this House, we like to think we take the time we need to speak on a bill, that it gets a full hearing. Instead, we get time allocation imposed on us, and then the amendments to that motion so that we can’t talk about it.

Speaker, I know my time is rapidly running out and I know the member from Essex wants to get in on this as well. I just say, it saddens me and disappoints me that we don’t have an opportunity to discuss this sugar-coated weasel bill that was being presented. Instead, we have to talk about a time allocation motion and amendments to the motion. Indeed, a lot of people do feel tricked by this.

The Ontario Energy Board is like a gatekeeper. They hold public hearings, and, if you want to do something like build a transmission line, you have to meet their needs test, but this bill would strip that away. We wouldn’t have the public hearings; we’d strip away the power of the Ontario Energy Board and give it to the cabinet table where, should they choose to take a proposal from a friend and call it a priority project, then that would get government approval, where other people in the queue waiting to have a needs test put on their proposal—say, down Leamington way—in order get power lines in to feed the greenhouses, the queue would be jumped by the friends of cabinet who would have their projects approved.

I guess I’m out of time. At this, I will sit down.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. *Debate deemed adjourned.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise today to welcome the Ontario Home Builders’ Association, including president John Meinen, and I look forward to meeting with them later this afternoon. I want to thank them for coming to Queen’s Park.

I also am pleased to rise and introduce visitors who are here today to see page Abby Moreside who comes from the great riding of Oxford. In the members’ gallery today are her brother, Erik Moreside; her former teacher, Karen Miller; and Janet Thompson. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s my delight to introduce a young student from Ursula Franklin who works voluntarily in our office: Spencer Higdon-McGreal. Welcome.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I’m very pleased to rise today on behalf of page captain Jade Mair Douglas, and to introduce and to welcome her mother Shawna Mair and her grandmother Joyce Mair in the members’ gallery this morning. Welcome.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I’d like to introduce Constable Michael Robinson and Constable John Tracey from the Stratford Police Service.

Ms. Cindy Forster: We have three members of the Niagara Region Police Association here today. We have Rick Gordon, director of civilian services; Neal Orlando, a sergeant; and Andrew Gordon, a detective. Welcome to Queen’s Park, gentlemen.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It’s my pleasure to introduce Carlos Coutinho, chief operating officer of CAA South Central Ontario; Teresa Di Felice, who is the director of CAA South Central Ontario’s government and community relations and driver training; and Elliott Silverstein, manager of government relations, CAA South Central Ontario. They are here in the members’ gallery today.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd also like to introduce folks from CAA: Matthew Turack, division president, insurance, CAA South Central Ontario; Sue Waywell, board chair, CAA South Central Ontario; and Amy Bryson, board member, CAA South Central Ontario. Welcome.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to welcome a few members of CAA Niagara to the House today: Rick Mauro, who is vice-president of marketing and public relations; Bill Willard, who is vice-president of automotive services, CAA Niagara; and Dave Shaw, who is a board member of CAA Niagara.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to introduce my good friend Bruce Chapman of the Peel Regional Police, who is here for the police association lobby day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to welcome page Nicole Haim's father, George Haim. He is here today in the public gallery.

I also want to introduce Elliott Silverstein, who was already introduced, but he is my constituent so I wanted to mention that as well. He is the manager of government relations, CAA South Central Ontario, and his office is also in my riding of Thornhill; as well as Ethel Taylor, board member, CAA South Central Ontario. I'd like to remind everybody that there's a reception hosted by CAA on the second floor in the reception room following question period.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Solicitor Alesia Sostarich, from the firm Arseneau Poulsen, who is here from Sudbury.

As well, I have a page from Nickel Belt, Vanessa Morris, and her mother, Josée Morris, is with us today in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to welcome the following people from the Durham Regional Police Association: Randy Henning, Tim Morrison, Jamie Bramma, Colin Goodwin, Rob Aukema; and of course also from the Police Association of Ontario, Jason DeJong. I'll be meeting with all of them later this afternoon.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome four members from the Windsor Police Association who are here today: Ed Parent, Carol Forbes, Pete Mombourquette and Steve MacDonald. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm honoured to welcome to Queen's Park today members of the Halton Regional Police and the president of the Police Association of Ontario: Rob Todd, Shane Barnes and Sarah Diamond.

I'm also delighted to welcome from CAA South Central Ontario Teresa Di Felice, director, government and community relations and driver training; Cindy Hillaby, vice-president; and Tracy Nickleford, manager, community relations. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce, from the Sarnia Police Association, Mike Kahert, Scott Clarke, Miroslav Soucek, Carole Mariuz and Debra Thibert. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I would also like to welcome police officers from the Durham region here with the Police Association of Ontario. I see up in the public gallery as well that we have doctors joining us from

Oshawa and the Durham region. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd like to welcome to the House today, from the Kingston police association, Sean Bambrick, Jason Cahill, Jason Alblas, Graedon Schaeule and the new president of the Kingston police association, Cameron Gough. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: On behalf of the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and page John Millar, I'd like to welcome John's parents, mother Kathleen Millar and father Daniel Millar, who are in the gallery with us today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to welcome Chris Leahey, councillor from the west ward in Whitby. I would also like to welcome delegates attending with the PAO from the Durham Regional Police Association. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the many doctors who will be coming to the Legislature today. In particular, I'd like to welcome Dr. Nadia Alam, Dr. Mark Linder, Dr. Jason Profetto, Dr. Kulvinder Gill, Dr. Brenna Velker, and Tara Bourque, from Sarnia, who is visiting us today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today members of the Niagara Region Police Association: Andrew Gordon, Rick Gordon and Neal Orlando. Attending from the PAO is Mark Baxter.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like members of the House to recognize Dr. Jill Bailey from the Dufferin Area Family Health Team, who has joined us here today.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Members of the Police Association of Ontario are with us here today at Queen's Park. Please join me in welcoming president Bruce Chapman, executive director Stephen Reid, and chair of the board Jim Glena. In addition, please also welcome Larry Wood, Andrea Lamothe, Mark Baxter, Jason DeJong, Jason Barber and Michael Gendron. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome, from the Strathroy-Caradoc Police Association, officers McGuire and Landers.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Today, on National Bioenergy Day, I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park, in the east gallery, Jeff Lyash, who is the new CEO and president of Ontario Power Generation. Mr. Lyash and his colleagues from OPG are doing a great job, and it's my pleasure to recognize their outstanding work and welcome Jeff to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to recognize our page captain from Kitchener, Victoria Gates. She's got some special guests joining her: her mother, Jacqueline Armstrong Gates; her father, Jeff Gates; her brother Davis Gates and cousin McKenzie Embree. They're in the members' gallery. Welcome and congratulations, Victoria.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome members of the Port Hope Police Association: Mat Lawrence, Nathan Clarke and Terry Teno.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to the gallery officers Dave Miller and Joel Rehill from the Chatham-Kent Police Service.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'd like to welcome members of the Peterborough Police Association here today—I'll be meeting with them later today—and Jeff Chartier, who does such a great job as president of that association.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I'd like to welcome Howard Brown today from the association of professional engineers. They have a reception tonight. We're looking forward to that.

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am happy to welcome the Professional Engineers Ontario to question period. We have with us PEO president Thomas Chong, PEO registrar Gerard McDonald, PEO president-elect George Comrie, and PEO manager of student and government liaison programs Jeannette Chau. We welcome all of you to the reception tonight.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to welcome my friend Doug DeRabbie from the Insurance Bureau of Canada. I'd just thank you for the work you're doing on financial literacy.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to wish happy birthday to my parliamentary assistant, Lorenzo Berardinetti. It's his birthday today, so happy birthday.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'd like to welcome Steve Deveaux, who's here with Tribute Communities, the home builders, and a constituent of Beaches—East York.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further introductions?

You'll notice I gave as much time as necessary to invite all of our guests, because we do want to welcome them and thank them for being here. I have noticed a couple of things during that time. First of all, thank you for being brief and not giving speeches when introducing; that's good. The second thing is, unfortunately, I noticed that someone was reading from their machinery, which is not permissible. I remind all of you that you're not to use those implements in the House for anything, actually.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would also now like to introduce the members to our new pages this week. So if they could assemble, we will introduce our pages:

From Whitby—Oshawa, Julia Cooper; from Essex, Marco Di Laudo; from Burlington, Michael Douglas; from Halton, Julia Empey; from York West, Symrin Flora; from Kitchener—Conestoga, Victoria Gates; from Thornhill, Nicole Haim; from Mississauga—Erindale, Irene Hu; from Perth—Wellington, Faith Knechtel; from Peterborough, Sebastian Lingertat; from Scarborough—Guildwood, Jade Mair Douglas; from Simcoe—Grey, Samuel Martin-Chase; from Wellington—Halton Hills, John Millar; from Oxford, Abby Moreside; from Nickel Belt, Vanessa Morris; from Algoma—Manitoulin, Kyle Preuss; from Windsor—Tecumseh, Cameron Rodzik; from Beaches—East York, Gavin Shepherd; from Brampton—

Springdale, Soham Shah; from Toronto Centre, Shirley Wu.

These are our pages for this week.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The numbers don't lie. The numbers don't spin or evade the truth. Last year, the federal government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This applies to all sides.

Please continue.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Last year, the federal government gave \$652 million more for health care than the previous year, but this Liberal government increased the health care budget by \$598 million. There's a difference of \$54 million—\$54 million that should have gone to fund patient services, nurses and home care. Instead, this Liberal government diverted the money to pay for their own scandals, like gas plants and Ongc.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain why she took \$54 million from health care in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition seems—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As one can notice, it happens on both sides. Now let's stop it.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It seems that the Leader of the Opposition is carrying on a tradition of that party of not really understanding the math, having a bit of a challenge, so let me just go through this. The PC leader is simply wrong when he talks about the \$54 million from the Canada Health Transfer. If he looks at last year's public accounts and compares it to our 2015 budget—look at those projections—he'll see that there's no \$54-million gap.

What there is instead is over \$100 million in additional funding for health care, over and above what was in those projections. I would just ask the Leader of the Opposition to take a look at the numbers and do the math.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? *Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. *Interjections.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

I can read this very well. I'm going to move to warnings immediately, so calm down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: The government may applaud their \$54-million cut, but the government's cuts are having real effects on Ontario patients. There are hundreds of doctors here at Queen's Park today

who have told us countless stories of how the government's cuts will reduce the care that patients deserve in Ontario. Cuts to physician services and billing caps mean that doctors, who are small business owners, have to cut staff who are providing health care and reduce services provided to their patients.

These highly respected professionals are offended—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health is warned.

Mr. Patrick Brown: These highly respected professionals are offended that the government continues to demonize them.

Will the Premier put patients first, stop attacking doctors and recognize the fact that health care is important in Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My grandfather was a doctor. He practised medicine after the First World War in north Toronto for 40 years. My father was a doctor, and my daughter is finishing nursing—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You didn't cut his wages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned. And whether you hear me or not, the warning stands.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I only make that point because it is very important, to me personally and to our government, that we have a very strong working relationship with our health professionals. It's extremely important. It's why we increased the health budget to a total of \$50.8 billion this year. That's an increase of 1.2%. We're increasing physician compensation by 1.25% over the next three years. The money that is going into health care is increasing. It's increasing year over year, and we will continue to work with our health professionals, because they're so critical to the well-being of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: You're not going to find a single doctor in the province of Ontario who believes your argument that you're not cutting health care. It is a well-known fact that you took \$54 million from the federal health transfer to spend in other areas.

What I can't believe, Mr. Speaker, is that to make up for this diversion of money, this government is asking doctors to compromise quality care. They owe it to their patients. Doctors want to deliver quality care to their patients, and you're diminishing that. They're forcing emergency rooms to take on more patients when those patients lose their family doctors.

Why won't the Premier do the right thing, restore the \$54-million cut and recognize the fact that no one in Ontario believes you're not cutting health care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The right thing would have been a member who was sitting in the Harper government fighting on behalf of the people of Ontario to provide for more increases. Since 2004-05, program spending in the Ministry of Health has increased by more than \$18 billion while CHT has only increased by \$6.8 billion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You never know when I'm going to hit.

Finish, please, and wrap it up.

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Wrapping up, sir.

He makes reference to the budget, which talks about projections. The actuals that were recently published show that spending for health care has actually increased by \$1.1 billion, well over the \$50 billion. Every single dollar of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the doctors and patients here today are victims of your scandals and waste. Billions of dollars have been squandered to benefit Liberal friends and special interests, because it's more important to this Liberal government to pay millions in bonuses to Pan Am executives than to make sure 800,000 Ontarians get a family doctor; because it's more important to this Liberal government to dole out millions from eHealth to Liberal-friendly consultants than to make sure addiction clinics don't shut down.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Premier tell the doctors who are here today, and their patients, that paying for her scandals is more important than funding front-line health care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to welcome the doctors who are here today and acknowledge their presence. I want to say I'm proud to be part of their profession.

I also want to say I had a meeting with the OMA executive, with the president of the OMA, Dr. Michael Toth, yesterday. We talked about a number of issues. I reiterated the government's interest in negotiating and getting back to negotiating.

We've never actually stopped that process. We followed a process that was agreed to in writing by the OMA back in 2012 that led to an umpire, to retired judge Warren Winkler, coming up with a proposal, accepting

the government's offer and imploring the OMA to accept that offer.

Regrettably, the OMA didn't. We are implementing the offer that was presented and endorsed by retired judge Warren Winkler, but we had a very positive discussion yesterday with the OMA. I'm happy to talk about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the Premier: Hospitals across Toronto are operating at 115% capacity. Hospital beds are filled with seniors who now wait 69 days to get to a nursing home, an increase of 18 days since—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you for that, Speaker.

Health Quality Ontario reported that half of Ontarians are not able to schedule a timely visit with their primary care provider when they are in need, yet this government responds by cutting over \$800 million to doctor services, forcing clinics to close and sending more and more people to hospitals' emergency rooms.

Mr. Speaker, where are these Liberal Premier's priorities? Will the Premier reverse her health care cuts before the next set of clinics closes in this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the examples that the member opposite just gave are precisely the reason why we've asked our physicians—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The comments and examples made by the member opposite are exactly the reason why we've asked our physicians—after a 60% increase over the last decade, to the point where they're the best-paid doctors in this country, as they deserve to be, we've asked them to hold the line, take a modest reduction so we can actually invest in home and community care, so we can invest in our hospitals, so we can invest in the other health care workers who are at the front line, working hard, like our PSWs.

When I met with the president of the OMA yesterday, we had a very good discussion. I presented to them another opportunity to create, as Warren Winkler asked us to do, a task force to look at the future of physician services. He embraced that and endorsed that. The OMA previously did as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Mr. Speaker, the health minister is asking doctors to take a pay cut to pay for their scandals: the gas plants, eHealth and smart meters.

Back to the Premier: The Health Quality report found that less than half of patients hospitalized for heart failure or chronic lung disease saw a doctor within the week after discharge. For those hospitalized with a mental illness or addiction, the numbers are even worse, with more than two thirds of those patients failing to see a doctor within seven days of their release—which is why the Liberal government's cut to physician services makes no sense at all.

The cost of these cuts will not be measured in stats or dollars and cents. The cost will be measured in the suffering that seniors will endure when they wait hours in the ER because they can't get an appointment with their doctor, if they're lucky enough to have one at all.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier care nothing for the suffering that these cuts will inflict on the people of this province, who deserve timely, quality health care?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we aren't cutting the budget for our doctors. Our doctors' budget is increasing by 1.25% this year. It's increasing by 1.25% next year as well.

We're bringing 700 net new doctors into this province this year alone. That's three times the rate of population growth. We're continuing to provide the services that people depend on.

We're not talking about health services and the delivery of health services. We're talking about one thing: We're talking about compensation to our doctors, who are the best-paid in the country, as they deserve to be.

I want to get back to that important discussion I had with President Toth of the OMA yesterday, where we provided them with the opportunity to work in partnership with us to create a task force on the future of physician services, to look at a whole broad range of issues, including compensation.

We're prepared to negotiate today, tomorrow, going forward, working in partnership with the OMA.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Against the public's wishes, the Premier is plowing ahead with the unnecessary sell-off of Hydro One. Based on the initial share offer, the Premier is now projecting the sale will generate \$2 billion less than originally forecast.

My question for the Premier is this: Where is the \$2-billion shortfall coming from—repayment of the debt or from axing infrastructure projects?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let's just be clear on what's happening right now. We are broadening the ownership of Hydro One in order to finance what is the largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history.

This release of the prospectus is the first step in a process. The leader of the third party knows, I think, that

the final price has not been set. This is a process whereby the price will be set.

We are on track to realize the \$9 billion that will allow us to invest \$4 billion in infrastructure—infrastructure that is sorely needed in our urban, rural and northern communities. We are going to make those investments, and we are making those investments because we know that economic prosperity in the immediate future and in the long term depends on those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier has never needed the money from the sell-off of Hydro One to build infrastructure. There are other options, and the people of Ontario have been telling her loudly and clearly to change course.

When the profits from the sell-off were estimated at \$4 billion, that sum represented only 3% of the \$130 billion of the Liberals' promises on infrastructure spending. Now they stand to make over \$2 billion less on this unnecessary sell-off.

The people deserve to know where that loss of \$2 billion is going to be coming from. What does that mean to the Premier's promises? Is the Premier planning on paying down less of the hydro debt, or will she start axing some of her infrastructure projects?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me be clear: The price has not been set yet, and we are on track to realize the \$9 billion.

The reality is that the lack of a plan that the leader of the third party put forward means that had she had the opportunity, none of the projects that we are on track to deliver would have been delivered. I've asked her in this House before, and I will ask her again: Which of these projects would she have cancelled, Mr. Speaker? Would she have cancelled the electrification of the Barrie line, which would increase weekly trips from 70 to 200? Would she have axed the Milton line 15-minute peak-direction service? Would she have axed the new alignment of Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph? Or would she have cancelled the \$1 billion for the Hamilton LRT? Is that the project she would have cancelled? Because she had no way of financing all the projects that we are delivering as we speak.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier hasn't even sold off the first tranche of Hydro One shares, and it looks like she's already down \$2 billion for her infrastructure promises.

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The Premier has insisted time and time again in this House that without the money from the sell-off of Hydro One, every single project in Ontario is at risk. Now that she's going to have \$2 billion less from the sell-off of Hydro One, Ontarians deserve to know which projects she's going to be cutting. Is it going to be all-day, two-way GO in Kitchener-Waterloo? Is it going to be the Maley Drive extension in Sudbury? Is it going to be public transit projects right here in Toronto? This Pre-

mier needs to let the people of Ontario know which projects she's cutting when she doesn't get the money that she says she needs—but she doesn't—from the Hydro One sell-off.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, at least we've got the NDP talking about infrastructure. At least they're talking about transportation infrastructure; that's a first. The fact is that the leader of the third party had no plan to build infrastructure, so she hasn't talked about infrastructure for three years.

We are engaged in the first step in a process to realize the \$9 billion, \$4 billion of which will be invested in infrastructure. She knows perfectly well that the price has not been set yet. She also knows that it is necessary for us to make these investments in infrastructure and that there are projects all over the province that have already been begun, that are on track to be begun, and that we are working on.

So I say to the leader of the third party: We are electrifying the Barrie line. We're electrifying part of the Kitchener line, the Lakeshore line. We're expanding Highway 7 between Kitchener and Guelph, and improving—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need the theatrics. I know what to do.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The incoming federal government has just promised \$125 billion over 10 years for an infrastructure program—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The incoming federal government has just promised \$125 billion over 10 years—

Hon. David Orazietti: And you don't want that in your ridings?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Government Services is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —for an infrastructure program to begin immediately. Presumably a significant amount of the money will flow to Canada's largest province. The Premier has insisted that the only way she can fund Ontario's infrastructure needs is through the sell-off of Hydro One. Well, now there's another obvious solution.

My question for the Premier is this: Will she do the right thing, abandon her plan to sell off Hydro One and demand Ontario's fair share of the new federal infrastructure project money?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's wonderful to hear the leader of the third party supportive of the new federal government. It's as it should be.

Mr. Speaker, when I go to municipalities around the province, which I do regularly, and all of our members

are talking to municipal leaders all over the province, there is no shortage—in fact, there is a wealth of need in this province. The fact is that infrastructure was neglected. When we came into office, there was a huge infrastructure deficit across the province. We have been working on that. We have been working with municipalities. We haven't had a federal partner. We would have been able to do more had we had that federal partner. Now we do.

So we have a plan. We've got a plan that we are implementing. If the federal government will work with us, we can do more, and more is needed in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, what's needed in this province is the maintenance of our public electricity system for the people of this province, now and for generations to come. That's what's needed in this province.

The government sell-off of Hydro One was supposed to net them \$4 billion towards their \$130 billion of promises over 10 years. That's approximately 3%, or \$400 million a year over the 10-year period. With the new federal government promising an aggressive infrastructure program, surely Ontario, Canada's largest province, can expect at the very least \$400 million a year. Here's an opportunity for the Premier to listen to the people of Ontario, to do what they're telling her to do: Stop the sell-off of Hydro One, and use the new federal infrastructure program funds to build the infrastructure that Ontario needs.

Will this Premier do the right thing and abandon her wrong-headed scheme to sell off Hydro One? Because it is absolutely unnecessary all the way around.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party started this round of questions with the contention that we don't have enough money for infrastructure investment. Now, she's suggesting that we have too much money for infrastructure because the federal government is going to be working with us.

The reality is that there is a need for infrastructure investment across this province. In fact, as the new leader of the federal government has said, there is a need for investment in infrastructure across the country. It looks different on the west coast than it does in the Northwest Territories. It looks different in PEI than it does in Quebec. But the fact is, there is a need across this country for investment in infrastructure. It's one of the reasons that I believe that Justin Trudeau won, because he recognized that. He is going to work with the provinces, he is going to work with the territories, and he is going to augment and support the plans that we already have in place.

But that doesn't let us off the hook. We have to stick to our plan in making investments that we've committed to the people of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier's plan is wrong for Ontario. It is wrong for the people of Ontario, and this is her chance to make things right. The people of Ontario want this Premier to stop the sell-off of Hydro One. It is absolutely unnecessary. Now that we have federal promises of new infrastructure money for Ontario, this sell-off is even more unnecessary than before, Speaker.

One wonders what the big hurry is to get Hydro One into the hands of private investors. One would have to ask the Premier that very question. But the most important question is this: Why will the Premier not do the right thing? Why will she not do the right thing and stop this unnecessary sell-off of Hydro One, keep it in the hands of the public where it belongs for today and for generations to come?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So here's the urgency. The urgency is that we have roads and bridges; we have water systems; we have a need for broadband; we have a need for gas hookups; we have a need for transit systems that have to be built. That's the urgency. People's quality of life depends on these investments, and the ability of businesses to expand, move their goods around, whether it's a rural or an urban community, and be able to draw more investment to the province. That's the urgency, Mr. Speaker.

When the leader of the third party talks to people around the province, I don't know if they say to her how critical it is that they have the support of the provincial government to make those investments, but I can tell you, when we go to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, or I go to the Ontario Good Roads Association, or we talk to the cities, the urban centres around this province, they need investment. They need a partner in the provincial government, and that's who we are.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Seniors in my riding and across Ontario worry about the cutbacks to care and wait times, which are getting longer and longer in Ontario. Mr. Birch of Owen Sound was told that he was facing a 14-month wait for cataract surgery. That's 420 days. Not only does this long wait for cataract surgery put Ontarians at three times over the national average, but it also has serious and grave consequences. People like Mr. Birch could go blind while waiting to access their health care.

My question to the minister: After 12 years of your government and 10 years since launching your wait time strategy, is a 14-month wait the best you can do?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from a party that didn't even bother to measure wait times, let alone actually invest in them.

We've invested hundreds of millions of dollars in reducing wait times across the province. We were the

first party, the first government in the history of this province, to actually measure those important wait times. So we had targets where we could improve on the wait times, and we've done that, including on cataract surgery, where in the last decade, the wait time for cataract surgery across the province has been reduced by 152 days, or 49% less.

We're making improvements. Cancer surgery—among the best in the world—we've reduced that wait time by 32%; angioplasty and angiography, by 40%. For knee replacement, we've reduced the wait time by 54%.

So it's a little rich, coming from a party that didn't even bother to measure, let alone invest in, reducing wait times. We've done both and we've seen the success.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: The minister says one thing but the people of this province tell us otherwise. Who are we to trust, this government or the people bearing the brunt of your cuts?

My question to the minister is simple. I want to know why you have failed to meet your cataract surgery targets and why wait times have more than doubled from 180 to 420 days for some constituents. Stop counting. Start doing.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This year alone we're investing nearly \$100 million specifically to reduce wait times on important surgeries and procedures, cancer treatments and other things that are important to Ontarians.

There is regional variation. There is variation across the province. In those cases where the wait times are slightly higher than in other parts of the province, we're working with our LHINs, we're working with the hospitals involved, with the practitioners who are providing that surgery or that service as well to ensure that we're able to reduce those wait times across the province.

We're doing an investment of a significant amount of money. You never had a plan to do that. You didn't measure wait times. You didn't invest. You closed hospitals. This government is committed—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think I have, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. This morning, the galleries are full with physicians. They decided to come to Queen's Park.

After a week in our constituencies, we had the opportunity to connect with the physicians in our own ridings. The truth is that this government has imposed a unilateral agreement on physicians in Ontario. A unilateral agree-

ment is not an agreement. That is why they are here today.

By their action, the government has created unrest within our health care system. What does the Premier have to say to all of the physicians who are here today in the gallery who are worried about her government's action and what it will mean for the health care of our province and for the patients who need that care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said earlier, we have a deep respect for the work that is done by our physicians across this province. As the Minister of Health has said, we're proud of the fact that they are the best-paid physicians in the country. That's a good thing. They work hard and they provide a wonderful service to the people of Ontario.

At the same time, we have made difficult decisions on this side of the House. We are increasing physician compensation by 1.25% over the next three years each year. At the same time, we made a decision on putting money into community care and particularly into personal support workers' salaries, which are among the lowest in the province. We believe that that was important to the quality and integrity of the health care system.

I'm surprised, actually, that we didn't see this kind of reaction from the NDP at that time. We didn't see them standing up to talk about support for the lowest paid, and we saw them vote against a budget that put money into those lowest-paid professionals in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I don't understand how come the Premier and the minister do not see the chaos they are creating in our health care system. Most of the 28,000 physicians in Ontario are not happy right now. They are not happy because they feel disrespected. Nothing good comes when a group of people feels disrespected. They are human beings, just like you and I, and when they feel disrespected, they react just like—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Please finish.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When will the Premier realize the damage she is doing to our health care system by the way she is treating our physicians? Nothing good will come of this. The unilateral actions are causing chaos. Who will pay the price for this?

I ask again: Will the Premier step up and fix the chaos, respect our physicians and have an agreement that both parties can agree to?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I do respect our physicians. I respect them deeply, and I respect the fact that the Minister of Health has met with the head of the OMA and has said, "Let's sit down again; let's continue this conversation." But, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the highest-paid physicians in the country. That is a good thing. It is a good thing that they are paid well. They work very hard. But there is a range of health professionals who need the support of this government if

we are going to have a health care system that's going to meet the needs of the people in this province.

There are people in their homes who need personal support workers not to be in precarious employment but who need a sustainable living wage. That's why we've made decisions to put money into community care and to support those people. I am surprised that the NDP does not understand that. I am surprised that they don't support making sure that we have equitable pay and that we recognize the importance of the work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

ELDER ABUSE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs. The minister recently visited my riding of Burlington to host an important regional round table consultation regarding a topic I feel very strongly about: the prevention of elder abuse in our province.

We know that elder abuse is a problem that often remains hidden due to fear, shame and lack of awareness. Speaker, I'm proud that Ontario was the first province in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse. As a member that represents a community with a significant seniors' population—close to one in five of our residents is a senior—I understand the importance of addressing this complex issue and was eager to participate in the consultation session to contribute to the dialogue for Ontario's elder abuse strategy review.

Speaker, can the minister please provide this House with further details regarding Ontario's elder abuse strategy and what our government is currently doing to protect seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I want to thank the member for the question. Let me say that I have had the wonderful privilege of visiting the riding of Burlington, and I can say that indeed it has a lot of seniors. They are very active, very engaged, thanks to the hard work that she's doing in her particular community.

But let me give you, Speaker, very quickly, what we have been able to do in the past five years alone. We have trained some 25,000 front-line workers in the different sectors of health, justice, social services and education. We have had more than 950 public education sessions reaching out to over 38,000 people. We are financially maintaining and supporting more than 50 local elder abuse networks. This is because of what the people have been telling us, where some of the problems exist, and we are doing that. The OPP have front-line trained staff and annual reviews. Our retirement homes legislation mandates providers to report any abuse of our seniors. We are doing that, and we will continue to do more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to commend the minister for his continued work in advocating for the safety and dignity of older adults in our province.

At the regional consultation session I attended with the minister, I was pleased to see how many local organizations and community agencies from my riding were represented and participating in this important conversation to provide our government with their thoughts and ideas surrounding elder abuse prevention.

These organizations included the Burlington Age-Friendly Seniors Council, the Halton Regional Police, the Prevention of Elder Abuse Committee of York Region, Family Services of Peel, and the Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network. The session was an effective dialogue on how we can better understand the increasing complexities around elder abuse—provincially, regionally and locally—and identify ways to build greater awareness and public education around elder abuse issues in Burlington.

Speaker, will the minister please inform the Legislature why our government is undertaking this review and why these consultations are important?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Thank you to the member from Burlington for the supplementary question.

Let me say that addressing and preventing elder abuse is a commitment that we have made within Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. We know, Speaker, that we have a challenge. We have a growing seniors' population, and we have to continue on a regular basis. This is what we are doing, this is what we have been doing—to examine and re-examine some of the plans and programs that we are doing by delivering the best services to our seniors. Unless we do that, Speaker, that we continue to examine our strategy, we won't be able to do that.

1120

The consultation that we have just completed with stakeholders and the various seniors' groups—and I'm very pleased that the member was part of the consultation—is, indeed, to get as much information so we can improve the delivery of service to our seniors. We continue to do that because we do care.

We were the first province in Canada to come up with a strategy to combat elder abuse. We will continue to do that for our seniors, Speaker.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This afternoon, we will debate a motion calling on the government to restore funding to physician services, including the \$850 million slashed from physician services.

The minister and the Premier received a letter from a new family physician practising in Dufferin-Caledon. In her letter, Dr. Maag laid out how cuts will impact the patients in her community. They are considering letting go of some staff and shutting down their blood lab, one of only two located in Orangerville. To quote Dr. Maag, "I would like to be clear with this point: Patient care will suffer."

Will the government restore the \$850 million you have slashed from physician services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, what we have done is, following the independent conciliator's advice, we have implemented the proposal that was presented to him and endorsed, which calls not for a cut but for a 1.25% increase in the physician services budget last year, this year, and next year. I would hope that the member opposite would agree that all we're doing is sticking to the increase that was presented to Judge Winkler, that he agreed with, because the danger is, if we go over that budget, that 1.25% increase in budget, then we won't have sufficient funds to be able to apply it to increases in home care, to pay the increase in wage to our PSWs, to address the important issue of nursing recruitment and retention, and those mental health investments that are so important.

We spent a year and a day negotiating with our doctors. We presented 75 proposals to them. We did not get a single answer or advice back from them on which one of those proposals would provide a savings.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Back to the minister: Your numbers don't add up. The population is increasing. People need to see their family physician.

Front-line physicians like Dr. Maag are saying, "You need to work with doctors. We're no longer part of the team providing health care. You've cut us out." As Dr. Maag said in her letter, "I would like to be clear with this point: Patient care will suffer. I want the Premier and" the minister "to know that you are outright lying every time you tell Ontarians that their care"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw.

Interjections: She's quoting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Stop the clock. I thank the member for withdrawing, but that is not acceptable. To those people in the background who are indicating that I made a wrong judgment, I did not.

Carry on.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I ask again, will the government support this afternoon's motion that states, "The people of Ontario deserve the highest quality of care in a world-class health care system"?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario deserve the best, highest-quality physicians in the world, and we have them. I'm proud to be a member of that profession.

I met with the president of the OMA, Michael Toth, and his team yesterday. They are the ones who have refused to come back to the negotiating table. From day one, I've said that I'm prepared to sit down and discuss, on a go-forward basis, after accepting the recommendations of our impartial, third-party umpire. They didn't like the decision that that umpire made. Mr. Speaker, we're bound to it. We believe that it was a fair offer; Judge Winkler agreed with us.

We've put in front of the OMA 75 proposals for how we could find savings so we could slow the growth of that budget to 1.25% a year. The OMA did not respond to a single one of those proposals. They aren't prepared to negotiate. I had a good meeting, however, yesterday, and I remain hopeful.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Education has repeatedly said in this House that she is willing and interested to get back to the table and expedite the process of negotiating with the province's elementary school teachers. But we understand the minister may not be informed. In fact, she may be perplexed about what's going on at the table. It's the government that walked away and hasn't been back since before Thanksgiving.

Speaker, does the Premier know that her negotiating team has not responded to offers on the table or returned to negotiate a settlement since before Thanksgiving?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I want to actually start by informing the House that since we last met or I've had an opportunity to speak, the French teachers, AEFO, who represent the teachers in the French public and the French Catholic boards, have in fact ratified theirs, as have the—

Interjections.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —which of course brings us to the point where we have a collective agreement with every group of teachers in Ontario except for ETFO, the English public teachers.

Certainly, we have been available to bargain. My people are at the hotel today. I was actually on call. My husband was about to leave for the cottage without me on Thanksgiving because I was there. I was there—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I'm going to use this opportunity to remind everybody to speak in the third person, and you are actually asking your question and giving your answer to the Chair. It lessens the temperature and it stays that way.

You have one sentence. Wrap up, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We are absolutely prepared to bargain.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I notice the minister is wearing pink today. Hopefully, that's in support of CUPE education workers, who have waited over a year to be heard at the bargaining table and respected.

Back to the Premier: That's two weeks, with school under way, with no movement from this government on reaching a settlement. Either the minister knows that negotiators for the government have wilfully ignored the latest offers on the table or the minister doesn't know what's going on. Either way, it's a problem, creating chaos in our schools.

There are only a few issues left to resolve. Our elementary school teachers want a settlement. Students and their parents want stability.

Speaker, will this government stop playing politics, direct its negotiators to get back to the table today and work out a settlement?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually are at the table with some of the education workers today. We are working on getting settlements with our education workers because we very much value the work that education workers do in our schools.

I want to reiterate that we are quite prepared to return to the table with the elementary teachers; in fact, I understand Mr. Hammond has indicated the same thing, and we've asked the mediator who's on the file to try to actually set up the dates to do just that. Because everybody seems to say, "We'd like to negotiate," we've asked the mediator to set those dates so we can get back to the table. We're very close to an agreement, and we believe that if we get to the table, we can finish it.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Today is a great day. It's National Bioenergy Day, and it's a chance for Ontario to recognize the many benefits of using biomass energy in our province.

Biomass is globally recognized as a renewable source of energy. Unlike oil, gas or coal, there is no additional carbon released from the combustion of biomass. It emits the same carbon that it absorbed just a few months or years ago.

The use of forestry waste to produce clean biomass energy diverts wood waste from our landfills and reduces the ecological footprint of the forestry industry. Putting wood waste to work is good for the environment and is good for the forestry industry.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: What is our government doing to support the great use of biomass in this province?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell for the question.

Speaker, in 2003, we committed to closing coal-fired energy generation in the province of Ontario. There were five facilities like that. Two of those facilities happened to be in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, one in Thunder Bay and one in Atikokan. We invested heavily. We converted both of those facilities so that they could accommodate and provide energy generated from biomass. We have, through that process, I would say, created a new industry in the province of Ontario that's utilizing biomass. It has created jobs.

1130

This is clean, it's green, it's renewable, it's sustainable. I know that the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change is thrilled with this approach we're taking. It's been good for the economy of northern Ontario, it's good for the planet and it's helping us meet our reductions when it comes to greenhouse gas emissions in the province as we meet our goals going forward.

It's a great policy, it's a great program, and I want to thank the member for the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you to the minister for that update. I know that forestry operations can only realize their full economic potential where there's synergy between operations. It's great to hear that Ontario's forestry operations are finding new opportunities to put their wood waste to work, such as the development of biomass pellets—which, by the way, Minister, I heat my own house with.

Ontario's forestry industry contributes around \$11 billion to our economy and supports about 200,000 jobs, direct and indirect. In 2013, Ontario exported \$4.9 billion in forestry products. It's great to hear that our minister and our government are committed to producing more sources of clean energy, such as energy generated through the use of biomass.

In addition to the boost to Ontario's forestry sector, could the minister please update the House on the conversion of the coal plants to biomass and how that will benefit Ontario, particularly the reliability of our system in northern Ontario?

Hon. Bill Mauro: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I want to thank my colleague for the question. The conversion of the Thunder Bay and Atikokan Generating Stations to biomass will keep energy jobs in the community and also ensure a clean, reliable, sustainable and local supply of electricity for the region. The plants are able to ramp the generation up and down very quickly to meet changing conditions on the demand side, helping to maintain electricity reliability in northern Ontario.

Northwestern Ontario is now home to North America's largest power plant fuelled completely on biomass. It is our priority to ensure that there continues to be a stable, reliable, cost-effective supply of electricity to the region.

The conversion of former coal plants to biomass is playing an important role in ensuring that northwestern Ontario has the power it needs when it needs it. Most importantly, it is clean power.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Education. The cost of Liberal mismanagement never seems to end. Last spring, high school students in Durham and Peel were out of their classes, all because of the Liberal government's failed two-tiered bargaining system. The failure not only cost 26 days out of the classroom for students; we now know through the memorandum of settlement which we obtained that it also cost taxpayers \$1 million in a payment to the OSSTF. What's even more appalling is that this Liberal government took funding from struggling students in order to pay for their own mistakes.

The minister botched up the bargaining. Will she explain why she's forcing students and taxpayers to pay for her mistakes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Education?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we need a little bit of a history review here. Back before the recession, in the agreement that was struck in 2008—the provincial agreement before the recession—there was an agreement to hire 2,300 additional teachers in the four systems. In fact, there were even more than that. We hired, over the course of the next several years, 2,300 teachers above and beyond the required class size in the collective agreement.

When we reached the recession in 2012, there was an agreement that for the end of that group of teachers, we had hired enough additional teachers. The enrolment was declining.

We haven't fired anybody. We haven't cut anybody. We have, in fact, hired—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the education minister: When the Liberal government wastes a billion dollars on gas plants, they force others to pay for it through higher hydro bills. When the Liberal government wastes a billion dollars on eHealth, they force patients to pay for it by cutting physician services. Now the Liberal government has botched teacher negotiations and they cut back on vital programming for students.

The education minister admitted herself that Bill 122 is flawed. Now it's time to prove that you've learned the lessons. Own up to your own mistakes.

Will the education minister announce to the House that she will bring in a new bargaining system, recognizing the fact you've had to pay out a million dollars to make up for your own mistake?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let me repeat: The class size ratios, the number of pupils per teacher, has not changed. That stays in effect with the bargaining. We have not cut the class size ratios. In addition to that, we've hired 2,300 additional teachers on top of the collective agreement since 2008, and those teachers remain in place. No teachers have been cut as a result of collective bargaining. No classroom programming has been cut. No special education has been cut.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When I stand, you sit.

The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is warned. Wrap up—one sentence.

Hon. Liz Sandals: There have been no cuts in the classroom.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is for the Premier. During this election campaign, this Premier established a very public relationship with Mr. Trudeau. I think that communities across the province are wondering whether that on-screen relationship will translate into

a real relationship when it comes to policies and strengthening our province.

This government has talked a good game about supporting manufacturing, but talk is easy when you don't have a willing partner. Well, the Premier says she has finally found a federal partner she can work with.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is warned.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So what will that mean for manufacturing? We need a plan to keep jobs in this country and communities working. Up until now, when it has come to manufacturing, the feds haven't been willing to be at the table. So what can we expect now?

Will the Premier please tell us how she intends to bring her new federal partner to the table to protect jobs and figure out a solid manufacturing strategy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Economic Development is going to want to speak to the specifics of what is happening in manufacturing in Ontario, because, in fact, we have a very good story to tell. There are challenges, obviously; we are in a transition.

To the point that the member opposite asked about, the relationship with the federal government: It's true. I made it very clear to the people of Ontario that their best interests would be served by having a federal government that was willing to work in partnership with the Premier of this province, that was willing to sit down with the Premier of Ontario and Premiers across the country to determine how best to engender a business climate that would draw more business to Ontario, that would create jobs and that would make the investments that we need in Ontario and across the country. I'm thrilled that we have that partnership now. It's not something that was just superficial. There is going to be a working partnership between this Prime Minister and the Premiers of the provinces of this country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Harper signed a trade deal that possibly binds the incoming government and that casts a shadow across all of our communities. Projections of job losses across the country, across our communities, are staggering. As many as 24,000 jobs in the auto sector will be impacted by the TPP across the country—potentially 1,500 jobs in Oshawa alone. All jobs are important and communities are going to be sorely impacted.

If the Liberals are really interested in protecting good jobs, then they would listen to the communities that are affected by this deal, communities like Oshawa. They are saying that it's time for the federal government and provincial government to sit down with the municipalities that rely on manufacturing and will be affected by this deal. This deal has fewer protections than the Americans were able to get: It's a lopsided deal.

Will the Premier use her new federal connections to develop a solid manufacturing strategy and protect Ontario jobs? Please tell us, where are our assurances that jobs won't be wiped out?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We do agree that having a strong federal partner when it comes to partnering with our businesses and growing our manufacturing sectors is really important. But it's also important in this party—for all political parties—to support the efforts we're making to build that strong economy. It would be really helpful to have a third party and a third-party leader who understand the importance of building infrastructure, because that's important to our economic competitiveness for our manufacturing sector, as well as our entire economy.

1140

It would also be helpful to have a leader of the third party and a third party that understand the importance of having competitive effective corporate tax rates. That's one of our greatest competitive advantages in this province.

Now that we have a strong federal party that will support these efforts, now that we're looking across the aisle at the third party, maybe they'll learn something from the strong federal party we have in place and support the efforts we need to build a strong economy, invest in infrastructure and invest in building a good environment for investment in Ontario.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. Now, Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves as to why our government must continue to improve accessibility in Ontario. Currently, approximately one in seven Ontarians has a disability, a number that is expected to grow in the future. Yet nearly 90% of Canadians believe that people with disabilities are not fully included in our society.

Peter Athanasopoulos of Spinal Cord Injury Ontario continually reminds me of the importance of helping re-integrate people with disabilities into society by ensuring that all public spaces are accessible. We know that Ontario has a very detailed plan for being accessible by 2015—totally accessible by that time.

Will the minister update the House as to the steps that are currently being taken so that we can reach this very important goal in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know that the member feels very strongly about this issue and I appreciate the question. If we are to lead the country and remain an international leader, we need to drive a cultural shift across society to improve accessibility. Ontario is conducting targeted audits of retail companies with 500 or more employees to ensure workplaces and employer practices are accessible during a three-month audit blitz this fall.

The Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure is leading the audits with the goal of ensuring that employers are making accessibility a regular part of recruiting and supporting employees with disabilities. Our ministry will check that large retailers meet requirements under the AODA, including creating and making public a multi-year accessibility plan that outlines the steps put in place to remove and prevent bar-

riers for employees and customers and developing customized emergency plans for employees with disabilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I thank the minister for his answer. We know he is working extremely diligently on this file, and he has the total confidence of the accessibility community, to be sure, that these steps that we're taking will be implemented in time that we can be totally accessible by 2015.

But, Speaker, improving accessibility is not just the right thing to do for our society; it's also the smart thing to do for our economy. In 2010, the Martin Prosperity Institute outlined that by having a more inclusive Ontario, we would see a \$7.9-billion increase in GDP. This would include \$1.6 billion in new spending for Ontario tourism and a \$600-million increase to our province's GDP per capita annually. This is why we must all work diligently to make sure that Ontario is totally accessible. As a start, I would encourage every member here to ensure that your constituency offices are fully accessible.

Will the minister expand on some of the ways that he is working to implement this audit blitz?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm happy to. Mr. Speaker, our ministry has made resources available and worked with organizations to help ensure workplaces are accessible. We'll continue to support businesses in these efforts going forward.

Many of these resources were developed in collaboration with employers. The resources include a guide to help create multi-year accessibility plans, free online training on accessibility, a guide to assist businesses to develop a plan to help an employee with disabilities with an emergency, free online sessions to help organizations comply with the AODA, as well as a new website to make it easier to understand the requirements.

We have a number of new initiatives that we announced last June that we'll be working on implementing in the coming months. But the key is working together with our business community to drive that cultural shift that's going to lead to Ontario continuing to be a leader in accessibility, up to our goal of a fully accessible community in 2025.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Gila Martow: To the Minister of Transportation: Last session, this government passed Bill 15, which combined two distinct pieces of legislation: auto insurance reforms and government regulation of the towing industry. Unfortunately, missing from this new legislation was a concrete plan to address highway incident management. I tabled a private member's bill, Bill 30, the Highway Incident Management Act, which would address this missing piece.

Elliott Silverstein, the manager of government relations at CAA South Central Ontario, who's with us today, says this: "Incident management is not only the foundation for safety at the scene of a collision. It is a mechanism that would help address issues of fraud and issues around chasing, two elements that were defined in

Bill 15.” The CAA believes that incident management is a critical subject that must be considered alongside any pending regulations for the towing industry.

Mr. Speaker, when will the minister move forward with the missing puzzle piece of their own Bill 15 by bringing Bill 30 forward for discussion in this House?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for her question and also thank her for bringing forward this particular private member’s bill. Of course, at the outset of question period today, many of us had the chance to acknowledge the great work and the fact that there’s a large number of people here from the CAA.

The Ministry of Transportation has many important issues that we take care of, but our goal at MTO is to safely manage highway incidents as quickly as possible. I should point out that over the past number of months, we were pleased to pass Bill 31, the Making Ontario’s Roads Safer Act, which will not only help protect drivers on our roads, but also a number of other road users: pedestrians, cyclists and others.

The ministry will continue to work with the OPP, with all of our partners, to make sure that we maintain that goal which I outlined just a second ago. Of course, this private member’s bill, like all others, will continue to work its way through the legislative process.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: In my question, I may have inadvertently said “2015” when I meant to say “2025.” I’d like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. As all members know, you have a right to correct your own record, and I appreciate that.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us today in the west members’ gallery is a former member for York Mills in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and for Don Valley West in the 37th Parliament: Mr. David Turnbull.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And no one stepped on my introduction, which was kind of nice.

DEFERRED VOTES

INVASIVE SPECIES ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LES ESPÈCES ENVAHISANTES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species / Projet de loi 37, Loi concernant les espèces envahissantes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 37, An Act respecting Invasive Species.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Tuesday, October 20, 2015, Ms. McMahon moved third reading of Bill 37. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Murray, Glen R.
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Nataychuk, Taras
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Nicholls, Rick
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Orazietti, David
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Pettapiece, Randy
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Hudak, Tim	Rinaldi, Lou
Brown, Patrick	Hunter, Mitzie	Sandals, Liz
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Sattler, Peggy
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Scott, Laurie
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwala, Sophie	Sergio, Mario
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Singh, Jagmeet
Colle, Mike	Lalande, Marie-France	Smith, Todd
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Malhi, Harinder	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina	Vanthof, John
DiNovo, Cheri	Martow, Gila	Vernie, Daiene
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Walker, Bill
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McDonell, Jim	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakabuski, John
Forster, Cindy	McNaughton, Monte	Yurek, Jeff
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.	
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Norm	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 100; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mrs. Gila Martow: Today I’m pleased to introduce our guests from the Canadian Automobile Association. The CAA is a not-for-profit auto club offering auto-

motive care and roadside services, insurance and travel. My constituent Elliott Silverstein is the manager of the government relations team at CAA South Central Ontario. Elliott and his team work to ensure that the voices of over two million CAA members are heard by government, while keeping their members informed about issues that affect them.

I have tabled a private member's bill, Bill 30, the Highway Incident Management Act, to better coordinate the clearing of accidents from our highways. Elliott has been one of the strongest supporters of Bill 30 and has recommended that this government move quickly on its implementation.

This past summer, Deloitte issued a report, following stakeholder sessions, on towing regulations, which stated, "Many panel members believe that defining and addressing traffic incident management is essential for the development of an effective regulatory framework."

I'm constantly impressed, not only with how well the CAA works with the government, but how harmonious they are with all the other stakeholders involved in keeping our roads safe, such as the Insurance Bureau of Canada, law enforcement agencies and tow truck associations, just to name a few. I want to thank the CAA for all that they do to ensure we get to where we need to be as safely as possible.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: As you may well know, we just had an election, and I think that we can anticipate changes when it comes to our provincial government and the new federal government. I want to talk about the potential opportunities when it comes to manufacturing and figuring out a solid path forward.

You know that I'm here on behalf of the people of Oshawa, but communities across the province want to know what the relationship is going to look like between the provincial government and the feds. So let's talk about the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP. Harper signed a deal that possibly binds the incoming government and casts that shadow across all of our communities. Projections of job losses across the country—across our communities—are staggering. As many as 24,000 automotive jobs will be impacted by the TPP across the country. That's as many as 1,500 jobs in Oshawa alone.

Every job is important, Mr. Speaker, and communities are going to be sorely impacted. If Liberals, provincial or federal, are really interested in protecting good jobs, then they will listen to the communities that are going to be affected by this deal. They would listen to Oshawa city council and Unifor Local 222. Communities are saying that it's time for the federal government and provincial government to sit down with the cities, sit down with the municipalities that rely on manufacturing and that are going to be affected by this deal. This deal, as it stands, has fewer protections than the Americans were able to get, so where are our assurances that jobs won't be wiped out?

Commit to all three levels of government working cooperatively to figure this out. Commit to a strategy that will address manufacturing in our communities. No more talking about talking about it. Do something. We need a plan to keep jobs in this country and communities working.

OPTOMETRY SERVICES

Mr. Bob Delaney: November 10 is Optometry Day in Ontario. Members of the Ontario Association of Optometrists can invite MPPs to visit their practices to see how eye care continues to evolve in the province of Ontario. Optometrists are our province's primary eye care providers. Last year, more than 100,000 unnecessary eye-related hospital emergency visits cost Ontario \$17.6 million. Optometry Day offers MPPs and local community members the opportunity to observe the day-to-day work that optometrists provide to their patients.

In our Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville neighbourhoods, I visited my own optometrist, Dr. Sabrina Ahmed, to see her, her staff, and some of her many patients at the first-ever Optometry Day pilot at her Meadowvale office. Dr. Ahmed has spent her time and her money ensuring that she is using the latest techniques and the most modern technology to protect her patients' precious vision.

As we age and when we are young, we all need to have our vision checked regularly. Adults can have their vision checked under their OHIP coverage every other year. Seniors are covered for an annual visit. Many common problems that affect our vision later in life can be discovered and treated if we look after our eyes at least as well as we look after our cars.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Residents in my riding were shocked last month when it was announced that nearly 160 full-time jobs would be cut from the North Bay Regional Health Centre. As I've stated before in this House, this now makes more than 350 front-line jobs cut at this five-year-old hospital, including 100 nurses.

The city of North Bay passed a resolution recently calling on this government to take action. North Bay city council believes the benchmarks the province has set forth are forcing these cuts upon the hospital, and that the province has an obligation to the health and well-being of the people served by this hospital. As a result, council has asked the province "to make adjustments to the financial targets and expectations of the local health centre that could lead to some maintenance of service levels," and to "respect the hospital's request for one-time transitional funding."

I understand there are discussions ongoing with the local LHIN. This is a bureaucracy that spent \$4.7 million last year—without seeing even one patient, I might add—and they're meeting regarding the situation at the hospital. But without this one-time funding for severances, we

will see 50 more front-line workers fired from the North Bay Regional Health Centre.

This government needs to get its priorities straight and stop the front-line health care cuts in my riding and across the province.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise today to recognize Community Health and Wellbeing Week here in Ontario. The week is being celebrated across our province and by the 109 community-governed primary health care organizations that belong to the Association of Ontario Health Centres.

Before I became an MPP, I was the executive director of the community health centre in Sudbury, and I also served as the president of the Association of Ontario Health Centres, so it's no surprise that I am very passionate about this year's theme, which reads as follows: "Community Health and Wellbeing: Shift the Conversation." There is a need to shift the conversation in our province. We must be able to have a different decision-making process regarding the overall health of our people as well as our health care system.

The government promised to develop a culture of health and a community wellness strategy, and yet there are no updates on this strategy, especially as it applies to people who face barriers to good health. I'm talking about people living in poverty, aboriginal people, francophones, people living in underserviced areas, rural communities, the LGBTQ community, racialized groups, and people with mental and physical disabilities. To ensure everyone can enjoy the best possible health and well-being, we need a health care system that is equipped to deal with all of the parts of people's lives that affect their health and their well-being.

Happy community health week, Speaker.

CONCUSSION

Mr. John Fraser: The Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario has been providing leading-edge treatment and compassionate care and support for children and their families for over 40 years. One of the supports they offer are CHEO Connects symposiums. CHEO Connects is a free information series for parents in the community which provides trusted information and access to local experts.

Next Thursday, October 29, CHEO Connects will be joining the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board and offering a session entitled Understanding Concussions: Recognizing Signs and Symptoms. The two-hour session will start with a brief presentation on concussions, followed by a Q&A session with a panel of experts on how to prevent concussions, and how to recognize, treat and monitor the progress of recovery.

As you may know, in 2013 Ottawa mourned the loss of Rowan Stringer, a student at John McCrae high

school, who lost her life due to a concussion she sustained while playing rugby. I am proud to be co-sponsoring Rowan's Law with my colleague from Nepean-Carleton, Lisa MacLeod. I also want to thank and congratulate her for her work on this issue. Rowan's Law will address raising awareness about concussions amongst young athletes, their coaches and their families.

I look forward to participating in the CHEO Connects session next Thursday at Nepean High School and engaging with parents about keeping our kids safe.

1510

TAXATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Taxes are too high in the province of Ontario. Our tax code is too complicated, and the people of Ontario cannot afford to be paying new and even higher taxes under the federal and provincial Liberal governments.

What we need is an economic plan for jobs in Ontario that cuts taxes and lessens the burden on small businesses and families. History proves that when governments reduce the tax burden, jobs are created, the economy grows and families are better off. The taxpayer is not a bottomless piggy bank. Keeping taxes down is not just good for the taxpayer and the economy; it also keeps government accountable, pushing them to spend smarter and actually set priorities.

I am urging the Trudeau and Wynne Liberals today that before you go looking to increase taxes and bring in new ones, consider all the revenue you are getting now from hundreds of taxes like the HST, the gas tax, the death tax, the beer and wine tax, capital tax, corporate income tax, corporate minimum tax, insurance premium tax, the employer health tax, international fuel tax agreement, land transfer tax, school taxes, personal income tax, provincial land tax, racetrack tax, retail sales tax—they go on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Ontario are having a hard enough time making ends meet and paying their hydro bills, all the while worrying that the struggling provincial economy will mean more job losses. We need an economic plan today for jobs in Ontario that cuts taxes.

AUTOMATED VEHICLES

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to rise before you and share with you news of a groundbreaking innovation under way in Waterloo region.

Recently at the University of Waterloo, our government launched a new pilot program to allow for the testing of automated vehicles on Ontario roads. I was very pleased to be joined by the Ministers of Economic Development and Transportation and the MPP for Cambridge.

Automated vehicles, or vehicles that drive without human assistance, are able to detect their surroundings using artificial intelligence, sensors and GPS. This technology has the potential to help improve fuel efficiency

and reduce traffic, greenhouse gases and accidents. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers has forecasted that by 2040, automated vehicles are going to account for about 75% of all vehicles on the road.

The University of Waterloo is one of the institutions involved in the connected and automated vehicle industry, and is home to WAVELab, the Waterloo Autonomous Vehicles Laboratory, which partners with local robotics companies.

At our announcement, two students who started their own self-driving company gave us a demonstration. They drove their autonomous golf cart around the Waterloo campus. It was very, very impressive.

We know that bringing together academic institutions and businesses is going to foster research and the commercialization of great ideas. I'm proud of the forward thinkers in my region who are advancing this kind of innovation.

BOWMANVILLE HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

Mr. Granville Anderson: This Friday, I will have the pleasure of attending the Bowmanville Hospital's 29th Annual Harvest Ball at the Ajax Convention Centre, a wonderful evening of dining and dancing for a good cause in our community. This year's theme, "Under the Big Top," will treat us to a champagne reception and masquerade draw. Of course, it's all to the benefit of the foundation's mission of bringing capital projects and equipment to the Bowmanville Hospital.

The hospital itself has been and continues to be central to our community and one I am very passionate about helping in our region. I know that hospital staff there work their hardest to bring quality care to patients, and I am eager to help them do so in any way I can. I look forward to seeing constituents and local business owners out doing the same this week, and I thank the hospital foundation for their efforts to organize this event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 422504 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr26, An Act to revive 1170517 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr27, An Act to revive Larry Blake Limited.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.
Report adopted.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES FEMMES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'll actually be speaking today as the minister responsible for women's issues.

I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to remind everyone that October is Women's History Month in Ontario. The Canadian theme this year is, "Her Story, Our Story: Celebrating Canadian Women." It's a fitting one since Women's History Month highlights the rich role women and girls have played in our history. Appropriately, the United Nations International Day of the Girl Child fell earlier this month on October 11. I'm also happy to add that this month, we're launching the 10th annual Leading Women/Leading Girls Building Communities Recognition Program.

Depuis ses débuts en 2006, ce programme a reconnu les contributions démontrant le leadership de plus de 745 femmes et filles dans leur collectivité.

Last year, we received 95 nominations from MPPs. Nominations are now open for 2016, and I look forward to an even greater number this year. I encourage every member to nominate deserving female leaders in their riding.

Another occasion we celebrated this month was Persons Day, which falls on the 18th of October every year. In the 1920s, the so-called Famous Five group of prominent Canadian women fought for all women in this country to be declared persons. In 1929, they won their case and opened the door for women to run for the Senate and other political office. Sans la détermination de ces cinq femmes, beaucoup d'entre nous, moi y compris, ne seraient peut-être pas ici aujourd'hui.

Since 1929, and since Agnes Macphail became Ontario's first female MPP in 1943, we've come a long way towards our goal of total equality for women. Women enjoy full voting rights and full equality rights under section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

All the members here should have received by now an invitation from me to host a Persons Day breakfast in their constituencies. My office has provided material to support all members in commemorating this very important occasion.

As the minister responsible for women's issues, I can say that we know there's always more work to be done, and, along with involved Ontarians, our government is doing just that. In March of this year, the Premier and I

launched It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. This plan will help change attitudes and behaviours, improve supports for survivors who come forward about abuse and strengthen legislation to make workplaces and campuses safer and more responsive to complaints about these crimes.

You may have seen the thought-provoking TV advertisement that was part of the multimedia, multilingual public education campaign to support the action plan. That ad has been very successful and now has well over two million views on YouTube. More than 83.5 million people have viewed the broader ad campaign centred around the Twitter hashtag #WhoWillYouHelp.

We're also taking action to close the gender wage gap and to ensure that women are paid fairly for the work they do. Closing the gender wage gap will help women in Ontario to achieve their full potential in the labour market. When we are all treated equitably, we all benefit. Voilà pourquoi la Direction générale de la condition féminine de l'Ontario a déjà mis en place un certain nombre de programmes pour aider les femmes à faible revenu. For example, since 2003, more than 2,350 women have received training through our Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology Training Program. This program gives low-income women the training they need to get better-paying jobs. We're proud to have invested more than \$2.1 million in this program last year alone.

1520

We know that closing the wage gap is important for Ontario's economic prosperity, for women workers and their families, so we need to continue working on this issue. Last week, my colleague the Minister of Labour announced that our gender wage gap steering committee would be holding a series of consultations across the province this fall, and I will continue to work closely with him in order to develop that wage gap strategy.

Women's History Month and all the other occasions we've been celebrating this month serve to highlight the struggles and the accomplishments of women and girls in this province and across our country. I'm proud to recognize Ontario's strong record of encouraging and supporting women and girls in the workforce and their communities. We're working to increase opportunity for women across the province and to make them safer, and I am committed to continuing our work towards achieving full gender equality.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm pleased to rise today during national Waste Reduction Week. This is a national campaign that strives to educate, engage and empower us to take seriously the importance of proper waste reduction practices. It is all about shrinking our individual carbon and environmental footprints, saving money in the long term and keeping our environment healthy.

All of us know the basics of waste reduction: reduce, reuse and recycle. Here in Ontario, we have made great

strides towards reducing the amount of waste we generate, especially through recycling.

For example, as many will remember, almost 30 years ago, the member for St. Catharines introduced legislation to establish the Blue Box Program, which today is part of our everyday lives. We can proudly say that the Blue Box Program is available in an incredible 97% of all Ontario households. But while we have achieved great success through recycling, there is much more we need to accomplish. While recycling is extremely important, it's not the end goal. We need to focus our efforts on reducing waste.

Our real goal, ultimately, is a zero-waste system and a zero-waste society, where materials can be reintroduced into the economy after their use and can be used to produce other materials and useful products for Ontarians. As an example, a pop can made of recycled aluminum uses 95% less energy than making an aluminum can out of virgin materials—just think about that.

We want products to be used, refreshed, refurbished and reintegrated into new products. That means promoting more durable goods that don't end up as waste. It means developing products and designing them so that they are not tossed away at the end of their life.

Existing diversion programs in Ontario have helped us avoid creating 2.2 million tonnes of greenhouse gas pollution. In other words, to reach that same equivalent, you would have to take 500,000 cars off the road to save that many emissions. Just think of how much more pollution we could avoid by expanding the range of waste materials that are covered by diversion programs and by doing more to reduce waste before it is generated.

The simple truth is that Ontario is one of the highest per capita producers of waste and air pollutants. In fact, almost 12 million tonnes of waste are generated annually in Ontario. That's nearly one tonne of waste per person, putting us amongst the highest in the world. For the last 10 years, we have steadily been sending three quarters of that waste to landfill.

We can no longer afford to act like a throwaway society. What we use today cannot be discarded tomorrow. We need to think about the consequences of the garbage as it piles up. At this rate, by 2050 we could be generating 17 million tonnes of waste a year and will need 17 more landfills to handle the flood of garbage.

Along with the growing mountain of waste, it is also important to consider the financial burden to taxpayers. While the province has worked to ease the burden through producer-funded diversion programs, these programs only cover a portion of the waste entering our system. Most waste management will continue to enter the municipal waste management system, which is funded by municipal taxpayers.

I am happy to say that we are soon taking action to further reduce our growing amount of waste. We will be introducing legislation, Mr. Speaker, with the approval of this House, eventually, to start moving us to a circular economy to improve natural capital productivity, to move to extended producer responsibility so the businesses that can actually reuse the material have final responsibility

for its end use. This will be a very significant shift in our approach philosophically, and substantively, to a more market-based approach.

It will have benefits for taxpayers. We estimate that our proposed legislation will shift the cost of recycling to producers, saving municipalities and municipal taxpayers over \$115 million annually.

With producers paying to manage waste, residents of Ontario can look forward to more convenient recycling options without additional costs, and to materials that could be valuably used in the production and manufacturing sectors of our economy being repurposed to useful inputs into our economy, rather than ending up as waste and in landfills.

We believe that, working with members opposite—and all parties in this House have a long-standing commitment to the environment and waste reduction. We think this is an issue that we should be able to work together on. I look forward to working with members on this side of the House and the opposite side of the House to make this vision a reality.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to acknowledge Women's History Month.

October is recognized as Women's History Month in Canada. During this month we celebrate the contributions that women and girls have made to Canadian history and the lasting impacts these contributions have had on our lives today. This year, the theme is, "Her Story, Our Story: Celebrating Canadian Women."

Ontario's history is rich with examples of women who have made a difference in the world, and all Ontarians can benefit from getting to know the stories of these exceptional women. Over this month, we should not only recognize the women that we have today in all of our ridings who have advanced both women's rights and their careers and been models for those people in our communities, but we should recognize women who've changed history for the better and who have paved the way for female advancement in Ontario and in Canada.

The Famous Five, of course, are the pioneers for women in every sector as they allowed women to be considered "persons" in the eyes of the law. Without their great contributions to society, women would not be able to become the innovators, the lawmakers, or whatever career that they choose today.

Over the years, women have broken through many barriers and pushed through the glass ceiling to become leaders in every part of our society. I have a story from my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock about aviation. Lindsay is home to an extraordinary pioneer called Molly Reilly, who was born in 1922 and was the first woman in Canada to be a charter pilot captain and a corporate pilot. She is also a member of the Canadian

Aviation Hall of Fame—a true pioneer of her time. Women's History Month aims at honouring women such as Molly.

Much has changed for women in Ontario since 1922. But the pursuit of equality is not about landmarks; it's about the desire to be proud of exactly who you are and working hard to achieve success and inspire those around you.

As the critic for women's issues, I'm happy to have had the opportunity in the Legislature to speak on Women's History Month and to say that we are all looking ahead together.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity today to speak on the need for an effective, affordable waste reduction program in Ontario, especially as we recognize national Waste Reduction Week.

Mr. Speaker, in all of the discussions I have had with stakeholders on this subject, I've heard a common message. The shared theme is that we need to keep industry involved and engaged in a meaningful way so that, ultimately, all players can be invested in reducing waste.

1530

Just yesterday, in fact, I had a very informative meeting with some fine folks from ONEIA who were concerned about this particular issue. They don't want to be left at the sidelines; they want to be engaged and active participants in finding solutions for waste reduction. The same could be said for so many other waste reduction stakeholders.

I have to give a nod to the Canadian Beverage Association as well, who have some very innovative ways that they would like to bring forward in Ontario to indeed achieve that circular economy that we heard the minister speak of earlier.

Ontario, in my mind, has stagnated in taking advantage of the economic benefits to developing a cost-effective waste reduction strategy. According to the Ontario Waste Management Association, the result has been the export of more than four million tonnes of industrial and commercial waste to the US for processing. That doesn't even account for the tonnes of waste we send to foreign markets outside of North America. This represents a significant loss of resources and economic opportunities for people right here in Ontario. Not only do we lose the financial value of the materials exported, but we also lose the innovation, the business opportunities and the job growth associated with recycling and reintegrating recovered resources into new products that are returned to the market.

We can do better and we must do better, Speaker. With Ontario's credit rating having been downgraded, our debt skyrocketing and our unemployment rates some of the highest in Canada, we cannot afford to let these economic growth opportunities continue to leave this province.

This is where industry can help. While many questioned the compatibility of environment and business, the truth is, private industry has driven technological innovation that has allowed us to become more environmentally responsible.

Speaker, let's get back to the business of managing our waste, our economy and our environment. Let's engage with the people on the ground, leading the way in innovation, and in doing so, make Ontario a leader once more in environmental policy and the economy.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's my honour to rise today to offer some comments on the 2015 Women's History Month on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath.

Since 1992, Women's History Month has been celebrated each year in October because of the historic significance of October 18, that momentous day in 1929 when women in Canada were recognized as persons and were thereby able to hold political office. The Famous Five who took the Persons Case to the Supreme Court blazed the trail that made it possible for 38 women MPPs to sit in this Legislature today, including, I am proud to say, the 11 women who make up the majority of the Ontario NDP caucus.

Women's History Month gives us an important opportunity to highlight and celebrate the contributions of Canadian women. This is a valuable initiative and well worth celebrating. But it can't just be a one-off. It can't be an annual pat on the back about how far we've come. Instead, let's look at Women's History Month as a call to action about how much more needs to be done if women are to achieve full social and economic equality in this province on issues like violence against women, the gender pay gap, affordable housing, precarious work and access to quality, affordable child care.

Let's look at Women's History Month as an exhortation to apply a gender lens to every bill we debate in this House and to consider the impact of legislation on the reality of women's lived experiences and the intersection of gender with race, class, disability, age, sexual orientation and much more.

Let's look at it as an opportunity to honour not just the Famous Five but the women who are quietly making history every day, the women who are leading efforts to make our province more just, more equal, more participatory, and the sisters in the labour movement who first led the fight for maternity leave, pay equity, labour law reform, child care, access to abortion, domestic violence laws and LGBTQ equality rights.

Finally, let's look at Women's History Month as an opportunity to reflect on how much we have collectively benefited from the struggles and achievements of the women who went before us in their quest to build for all of us a future free of discrimination, violence and poverty.

WASTE REDUCTION WEEK

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to rise in recognition of Waste Reduction Week. I have to say that, in this chamber, Waste Reduction Week is very much like the movie Groundhog Day, but instead of Punxsutawney Phil we have a blue box. Every 12 months, for years now, we have woken up, we have hit the alarm and found it's the same day with the same situation.

I just want to go back over a few of the records. In 2010, the Environmental Commissioner reported on Waste Diversion Ontario. The most recent records he had were for 2008. He said that effectively the overall waste diversion rate in 2008 was only about 23%, well below the 60% target that had been set. In 2013, the Environmental Registry: The government put forward its plan for a new waste diversion act and, at the time, said that only 25% of our waste was being diverted from landfill. That was 2013. We move up to today's hit on the alarm clock and we find that we're still in the same situation.

From 2003 to 2015, the actions we've needed on waste diversion have not happened. The minister has said, and I'm pleased to hear it, that he's consulting with stakeholders and that he will be bringing forward legislation that will allow us to divert a large part—my hope is, the vast majority—of our waste from landfill to reuse or to recycling—preferably reuse.

I have to say, with no disrespect to the minister, that I have heard his predecessors make similar speeches. Mr. Bradley from St. Catharines made very eloquent speeches on this. Others, even before him, made really great speeches. I guess the question, Speaker, is whether Glen Murray will do better than Bill Murray so that when we wake up in October next year, we actually will have a waste diversion act in place that will make a difference. Certainly the people of Ontario want one, and they want one now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

CONCUSSION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the rate of concussions among children and youth has increased significantly from 2003 to 2011, from 466 to 754 per 100,000 for boys, and from 208 to 440 per 100,000 for girls; and

"Whereas hard falls and the use of force, often found in full-contact sports, have been found to be the cause of over half of all hospital visits for pediatric concussions; and

"Whereas the signs and symptoms of concussions can be difficult to identify unless coaches, mentors, youth and parents have been educated to recognize them; and

"Whereas preventative measures, such as rules around return-to-play for young athletes who have suspected concussions, as well as preventative education and awareness have been found to significantly decrease the danger of serious or fatal injuries; and

"Whereas Bill 39, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to concussions, was introduced in 2012 but never passed; and

"Whereas 49 recommendations to increase awareness, training and education around concussions were made by a jury after the coroner's inquest into the concussion death of Rowan Stringer;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario government review and adopt Rowan's Law to ensure the safety and health of children and youth athletes across the province."

I affix my signature, as I agree with this fully, and present it to page Soham.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called "'Hydro One Not for Sale!: Say No to Privatization,' and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I'll affix my signature and will give it to page Abby to take to the table.

STUDENT SAFETY

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have got a petition here that's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

"Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

"Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers."

Speaker, I agree with the petition, affix my name and give it to page Kyle.

1540

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector; and

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity."

I agree with that and will pass it to page Gavin.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas private IT contracts cost approximately twice as much as services provided by public sector IT professionals; and

"Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario, the government spent \$703 million on private sector IT services last year; and

"Whereas, according to the public accounts of Ontario 2009-14, the portion of the government's IT budget going to the private sector has increased by 63% in the past five years;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government reverse the privatization of IT services that can be provided in-house and save the people of Ontario \$200 million per year by cutting out unnecessary private IT contractors and allowing the OPS to provide IT services to the government of Ontario."

I fully support this petition and will give it to page Nicole.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted" over "the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this and affix my signature, and I'm going to give it to page Marco.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Toby Barrett: A petition directed toward the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario farmers were prevented from meaningfully participating in government consultations around changes to allowable crop protection tools during the spring of 2015 due to the government scheduling consultations during prime planting season;

"Whereas the regulations the government of Ontario passed on Canada Day severely restrict the use of treated seeds that are of critical importance for grain farmers in preserving their crop yields and these changes are expected to cost Ontario's economy over \$600 million a year;

"Whereas it will be virtually impossible for farmers to access these necessary treated seeds for the 2016 planting season due to the bureaucratic hurdles being put in place by the province;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to suspend the class 12 regulations that were passed on July

1, 2015, to allow for farmers to plant in 2016, as they did in 2015; to allow for meaningful dialogue on the regulations, their intent and other approaches to achieving the same end, that won't devastate farmers in the province."

I agree with the petition and affix my signature.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I'm really proud to present that it will be 30,000 signatures on the PET scan petition. They're not all here today; it's over the years. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government has made positron emission tomography (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas, since October 2009, insured PET scans are performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with Health Sciences North, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through Health Sciences North, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the" residents of the northeast.

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and ask my good page Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to

immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will affix my name and send it to the table with page Julia.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture has protected class 3 agricultural land from development for the purposes of projects under the Green Energy Act; and

“Whereas the United Nations has declared the vital importance soil plays in human civilization and protection of this vital resource; and

“Whereas the solar energy facility, SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, planned for Ledge Road, Clemenger Road and Twin Sister Road, in the municipality of Marmora and Lake will occupy agricultural land that has previously been protected against development under the Green Energy Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs take the necessary steps to ensure that projects, including the SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, that are on protected agricultural land are protected from large-scale, industrial energy development.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Kyle.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called “Stop the Eviction of Long-Term-Care Residents,” and it reads as follows:

“Whereas every resident of a long-term-care home has the right to be treated with respect and dignity; and

“Whereas section 1 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007, identifies as its ‘fundamental principle’ that ‘a long-term-care home is primarily the home of its residents’; and

“Whereas regulation 79 under the act conflicts with this fundamental principle because it states that long-term-care residents can lose their home after 30 days in hospital and must then reapply and join wait-lists for available long-term-care spaces; and

“Whereas the risk of losing their home can create emotional distress and trauma for long-term-care residents who are temporarily hospitalized;

1550

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care change regulation 79 to ensure that residents of long-term care do not lose their home after a 30-day or longer stay in hospital.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and will give it to page Michael to take to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

I support this petition. I will sign it and send it to the desk with Abby.

ONTARIO FARMERS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario farmers were prevented from meaningfully participating in government consultations around changes to allowable crop protection tools during the spring of 2015 due to the government scheduling consultations during prime planting season;

“Whereas the regulations the government of Ontario passed on Canada Day severely restrict the use of treated seeds that are of critical importance for grain farmers in preserving their crop yields and these changes are expected to cost Ontario’s economy over \$600 million a year;

“Whereas it will be virtually impossible for farmers to access these necessary treated seeds for the 2016 planting season due to the bureaucratic hurdles being put in place by the province;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the government of Ontario to suspend the class 12 regulations that were passed on July 1, 2015, to allow for farmers to plant in 2016, as they did in 2015; to allow for meaningful dialogue on the regulations, their intent and other approaches to achieving the same end, that won’t devastate farmers in the province.”

I certainly agree with this and will pass it off to page Jade.

OPPOSITION DAY

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: I move that:

Whereas the people of Ontario deserve the highest quality of care in a world-class health care system; and

Whereas the Liberal government cut \$54 million of the federal Canada health transfer from Ontario's health care budget; and

Whereas the government has slashed \$815 million from physician services; and

Whereas the government has cut \$50 million from seniors for physiotherapy services; and

Whereas the government has eliminated 50 medical residency positions; and

Whereas these cuts will lead to longer wait times for surgeries, doctor appointments and at emergency rooms; and

Whereas the government's decision to cut funding will lead to the loss of jobs for front-line health care services and force the closure of much-needed walk-in clinics and addiction clinics;

The Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon Premier Wynne and the Liberal government to restore funding to physician services and return the missing federal Canada Health Transfer money back to Ontario's health care system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 3.

Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm happy to rise in support of this motion.

Health care is at the heart of every community. If you don't have your health, everything else is meaningless.

When I think of the importance of health care, I think of my late grandmother, Edna Tascona, in Barrie. For 45 years, she was a "blue coat" at the Royal Victoria hospital. I keep her volunteer appreciation certificate behind my desk here at Queen's Park as a reminder of the importance that health and hospitals are to a community, and that service. That's why I'm so alarmed by the diminishments in health care that we're seeing here in Ontario today, and I think why so many people in Ontario are alarmed—they're disappointed with these short-sighted decisions.

Ontarians deserve a government that understands investing in front-line health care workers is important, and one that makes patient-centred care a priority. Instead, the Liberals cut health care spending by \$54 million in the 2015 budget.

Everywhere we go in the province, we continue to hear stories; story after story about how health care has been diminished, and whether it was meeting with doctors in Ottawa, whether it was meeting with doctors in Windsor, London or Orillia, everyone is concerned.

The government cut physiotherapy services for seniors by \$50 million and cut another \$235 million from physician services. I say "another" because this is in addition to the \$580-million cut in the deal imposed on the doctors earlier in the year after negotiations broke down between the government and the Ontario Medical Association.

This government's refusal to work with our doctors will only exacerbate the problems we face. The physicians' perspective is critical to the modernization of the

fragmented and failing health care system. With this government as their partner, more and more doctors leave for other jurisdictions or pass on setting up a practice in Ontario in the first place due to the hostile climate this government created.

Earlier today, we heard a resident representative on OMA talk about the fact that they did a survey of residents in Ontario, and the difference between today and a few years ago is astonishing—the amount of residents who are saying that they're now considering leaving Ontario, in all corners of the province.

The Liberals' decision to cut residency positions is also ill-researched and short-sighted. You may not notice it today, but it's going to have a lasting effect on the province of Ontario. There are currently 241 communities in Ontario which the government itself has designated as high physician need. Some 800,000 Ontarians can't find a family physician, and each year 140,000 more people enter Ontario's health care system.

Seniors can't access home care services or secure long-term-care beds. What are the government's priorities? How are they allowing this diminishment of health care to take place in every corner of the province? It certainly does not appear to be health care. It's clear these decisions are all about money for the Liberals, and these cuts are being made at the expense of health of Ontarians.

Blaming the federal government doesn't wash with the facts. Federal contributions to Ontario health spending have continued, with 6% increases since 2004, through the Canada Health Transfer. So quite frankly, there's no one else to blame for the failing health care system here in Ontario than this Liberal government.

Let's speak about the pure facts. In 2015, it's the fourth consecutive year that base spending has been frozen for Ontario's 155 hospitals. Ontario funds its hospitals at the lowest rate per capita of any province in the country, and one in four has experienced significant cuts or is facing closure. Visit any hospital, talk to the doctors, talk to the front-line workers, and they'll talk about the huge challenges they are seeing on the front lines of the health care system, but the government is blind to it, or ignoring it intentionally.

This government has handed out—now, let's get this right—1,800 pink slips to nurses since they came to power. As this government continues to erode our health care system by slashing front-line health care services, we see what it is. The government has made it very clear what their priorities are, and it's not health care. We see a government trying to sweep up the mess they made.

Getting one's economic house in order is a good thing. It allows more resources to be directed towards things that matter to people. But what is unacceptable, completely unacceptable, is to use the patient as the dustpan for this insensitive and dangerous exercise.

Providing necessary physiotherapy for seniors and paying doctors to make sure we have family doctors around the province is not the reason we have a deficit and debt. We have a deficit and debt because of their

incompetence. We have a deficit and debt because they have taken a province that was the most prosperous in Canada and caused us to lose 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Don't blame doctors; don't blame nurses; don't cut physiotherapy from seniors; don't do a full frontal assault on health care in Ontario. It's patients that are paying the price for this government. It's patients that are paying the price for this governance in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I am imploring the government to rethink these short-sighted decisions, to do the right thing, to support the motion put forward today, and understand that in every corner of this province, we value health care. Just like my grandmother did for 45 years when she volunteered at RVH as a blue coat, we treasure health care in Ontario. We treasure strong hospitals. The hospitals are not strong today because of your government. Doctors are pleading. And frankly, the only doctor in the province who believes there's not a full frontal assault on health care, the only doctor who is going to believe this spin, is the Minister of Health. No one else does.

1600

There's no wrong in acknowledging the government has made a mistake. Own up to it, support this motion today, and let's protect health care in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few words to the Conservative Party opposition day motion having to do with cuts to our health care system.

Today we were all witness to having the galleries full of physicians who took time out of their busy schedules to come to talk to us. They came to talk to us. The least we could do is listen to what they have to say. The least we could—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. I can't even hear her. Once you were done—respectfully, they listened. Now I've got 15 conversations going on when the member from the third party is speaking. If you have a conversation you want to have, please take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sorry, Speaker. I didn't see you standing up right away.

Back to where I was: Today the Conservative Party has put forward an opposition day motion that deals with the cuts that we have seen in the health care system. It bears reminding, we have galleries that are full of physicians. Those physicians took time out of their busy schedules to come and talk to us. The least we could do is to listen to their stories, to listen to the message that they want us to hear.

I've been here for a little while now, Speaker—as long as you. I've been here for eight years. It's not very often that physicians take the time to come in person to talk to us. Why are they doing that? They're doing this because they are ringing the alarm bells. The motion that the Conservative Party has put forward speaks to that. It

speaks to the cuts to our health care system that are affecting the care that those physicians are able to provide to all of us—to all of us who will need care at some point in our lives. They do this day in and day out.

If you look at what has happened, since January of 2015—since January of this year—negotiations between the Ontario Medical Association and the government have ceased. There hasn't been any negotiation. Then the government decided to go with a unilateral agreement.

It's not an agreement when you impose something upon a group of people. It's not an agreement. You—

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is just wrong, and nothing good comes of this. Nothing good ever comes of this. You figure the government would know this. They tried that with the teachers, with Bill 115. What do you figure happened when you imposed a unilateral agreement on a group of teachers? Teachers are human beings, and they rebel. What happens when you impose a unilateral agreement on physicians? Physicians are human beings, and they rebel.

It is wrong. Nothing good will come of this, but they refuse to admit this. They refuse to admit that by their actions, they are creating chaos in our health care system; that by their actions, by refusing to realize that there is a human element to this—when you refuse to negotiate, when you impose unilateral agreements, you have to take into account the human factor of what you are doing now.

You are being disrespectful to every single physician in this province. When our Minister of Health gets up on his feet day after day after day and puts down and demonizes and disrespects our physicians day after day, what do you think that does? It sends this message throughout Ontario that our physicians are a bunch of greedy people who put money at the front, and care at the back. This is wrong, Speaker. Those people are here because they want care to be at the front and this is the priority of our health care system. This is the priority of physicians in Ontario. They chose to be physicians because they wanted to help people. In order to help people, we have to be cognizant of the huge responsibility that they have and that in order for them to do this, they need to be compensated.

I don't get it. I don't get it that we have a Minister of Health, who is a physician himself—we had the Premier on her feet this morning—who is willing to talk about anything except what those people are saying.

What the physicians in the galleries are saying is, "Listen to our story. Listen to the message that the Liberal government is sending to the people of Ontario." It's a message that is so disrespectful that they had to come here to talk to you. They had to come here to show you that they are people who want to do what they know best. They are physicians who want to look after us. They are physicians who want the best care possible in the best possible health care system in Ontario. The least we could do is to treat them with respect, but we can't even have that. When day after day the Premier and the

Minister of Health stand on their feet and put them down, it serves no good.

You see, for health to take place between the physician and the client or any other health care providers, there is this relationship of trust. You need to trust the person in front of you. They will often ask you to do things that intuitively don't seem like that much fun to do. This is their job: to convince us to look after our health, to take our medicine, to do what they prescribe in order to get better. In order to do this, you have to have this relationship of trust. You have to be sure that the person in front of you who is talking to you has your best interests at heart, that this person wants to look after you, wants to care for you. This is what physicians do, day in and day out. But when we send those messages, to anybody who will listen, that are disrespectful, then you have a direct impact on their ability to provide care. You have a direct impact on the quality of care that they can provide to the people of Ontario.

You—as in the Premier and the Minister of Health—are in a position of power. When you speak, people listen. When day after day you stand up and you keep saying that it's all about the money, this message is heard loud and clear by the people of Ontario. This message is damaging to our health care system. This message is damaging to the care relationship that needs to take place, and it needs to change.

They've come here today to tell you that they are more than willing to sit down and negotiate an agreement. Don't get me wrong, Speaker. I've been at this game long enough to know that in a negotiated agreement, nobody will be happy with it. Nobody is going to get everything that they wanted to get, but they will be willing to live with it, because a fair and respectful process will have taken place that gives them an opportunity to be heard, that gives the government an opportunity to be heard, and then you find a compromise. As I said, nobody's going to get everything they want, but they will be willing to live with it, because the process in itself is a process that leads to taking into account the human side of every negotiation. And this is what the government is missing completely.

So what have we got? We were in a constituency week last week. I guarantee you that most of us got a phone call from a local physician. I can tell you I did. On Wednesday night, I joined the Sudbury and District Medical Society for a talk, really, where we went around the room and they told us how down they felt. They told me how disrespected they felt by the whole process and how this was having an impact on the kind of work that they were able to do.

1610

It's hard to motivate yourself, day after day, often to be the bearer of bad news. Being a physician means that you are the messenger who tells people all the bad news. You are the messengers who tell them that, "You know those tests that I sent you for? Well, they came back, and you have a serious disease. You have cancer or COPD or you're diabetic"—all of that bad news is delivered by those good people because it is their job to do this.

To motivate yourself to do this day in and day out—that's what they've chosen to do because they want to help people, but when your government keeps sending out a message that puts you down, it makes this really hard. I don't know why we need to make things that hard. I don't know why we don't learn from one time to the next that it doesn't matter if you're a physician, a nurse or a teacher; you need to be treated with respect. You cannot have a Premier and a minister who stand in the House and put you down as a profession, as a group and as an association. It is so wrong.

We have this group of physicians that have come down. Physicians don't have very many ways to speak up. Let's make no bones about it: They all know that they are the 1%. They know that they are well paid. They all know that, apparently, they are the best-paid physicians in Canada—that's all that our Minister of Health is able to say in this situation. They know that, but nobody takes away the fact that they do important work. They deserve to be paid, just like you and I deserve to be paid, just like nurses and miners and everybody else deserve to be paid.

The reason they came here is because they want to be heard. They want to negotiate. They want to have an opportunity to have their side of the story heard. But since January of this year, there has been no talk. There has been a government with their big boots that says, "This is the way it's going to be. This is the way we are going to impose our view of the world on you." If we have a little peek at what the view of the world of the Liberal government is, it is something completely bizarre where physicians get to work, and every once in a while—three months—they will look at how much money we have paid through the OHIP schedule of benefits, and if that amount is over a certain amount that the government has decided, all of their pay gets retroactively cut back.

This is pretty weird because, on October 1, we had an overall cut of—I think it was 1.58%; I forgot the number that was announced on October 1. You have to realize that most physicians run small businesses. When you run a small business, you need to be able to look at what will be the revenues, what will be the expenses, and you plan for your business. Right now, Speaker, every couple of months, the rules keep changing.

It's pretty hard for a new grad coming out of school, with debts coming out of everywhere, to set up a new practice when you don't know how much you're going to be paid, you don't know when the next cut is going to come and you don't know when the next change to the way you're being reimbursed is going to come. Not to mention that we spent a lot of time, effort and energy to train new family physicians to work in interdisciplinary care, to work in community practices where they would work as part of a team, either in a community health centre, an aboriginal health access centre or community family health teams. And now that they have been trained to work—lots of physicians, primary care physicians, are happy to have their residency done in primary care so that they can be a primary care family physician. And

now they discover that they cannot join a family health team anymore, they cannot join a family health organization, that they will have to bill OHIP.

We spent all of that training telling them to be ready to practise in an interdisciplinary care model, where you get a capitation and here's how things are going to work. And once they graduate, we tell them that, "Oh, no, only a few of you a month will be allowed to practise that way. The rest of you will have to bill OHIP," which is not what they had been trained to do and what they wanted to do and what they had planned on doing, for reasons that have not been explained.

My area—all of the northeast is designated as an underserviced area, but I still have many of the new grads coming out of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine that want to practise in a team-based model and that are not allowed. They have to bill OHIP. They have to be fee-for-service, independent physicians. That's not what we want. We want them to be part of a team. We want them to come and work in an interdisciplinary fashion, but they're not allowed.

I must leave time on the clock for my colleagues that also have lots to say. I'll use my last few minutes to talk about the cuts to the number of residency places.

For a long, long time, we have had difficulties recruiting physicians where I come from in northeastern Ontario. With the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, things are better. Things are looking up. We are able to recruit more. I'm thankful for this, and I say thank you for putting this program in place. It is very, very worthwhile and very good.

But then this summer, we heard that 50 residency places were going to be cut. That's always very worrisome for any one of us who comes from an underserviced area. Because, sure, the teaching is important—and I'm thankful that we have the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in Sudbury and Thunder Bay—but what is even more important is their residency placement.

If we can get a physician to come and do a residency placement in a community in the north, this is our biggest tool for recruitment. Once they've had the opportunity to practise, once they know the referral patterns, once they know how the rest of the health care system works in the community—in the north or rural—they feel competent and confident in offering care to the people who live there, and this is very important.

In the cuts that the Conservatives have talked about, they've talked about the 50 residency placements that have been taken away. This is worrisome. We need those residencies to be there. We need residencies to be there so that physicians get comfortable with where they work and they set up practice, hopefully family practices, in northern Ontario.

So I will leave time on the clock. I want people to realize that when dozens and dozens of physicians come to talk to us, we owe it to them to listen to them, and we owe it to be respectful of what they're here for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm really delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this motion today. I think the good news is that the Leader of the Opposition is actually starting to talk about health care. That's a refreshing change for us. The bad news is, his facts are all wrong, and I'm here to actually bring some light and some evidence to that particular issue.

I see the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London is here, and I know he's going to pay close attention.

1620

As I read this motion, it starts by saying, "Whereas the people of Ontario deserve the highest quality of care in a world-class health care system." I could not agree more with that statement. We all agree that the people of Ontario deserve the highest quality of care. That part is accurate. It goes downhill from there.

It claims that the Liberal government cut \$54 million of the Canada Health Transfer from our health care budget. That's not true, and I'll explain why.

It says, "Whereas the government has slashed \$815 million from physician services." Not true.

He says that the government has cut \$50 million from seniors for physiotherapy. Anyone who follows physiotherapy knows that we've got 200,000 more people getting access to the physiotherapy, exercise and falls prevention programs. We are getting better value for that money, and I think that's our job.

It goes on to project what some of these changes might be.

I can tell you, Speaker, that our health care system is stronger now than it has been in a very long time; far stronger than it was when we took office 12 years ago. The improvements to our health care system—I'm not saying for one minute that this job is done; it is far from done, but it is a far, far stronger system now than it was 12 years ago.

Let's talk about transfers from the federal government. The Leader of the Opposition will be interested to read this transcript, because I'm sure he will want to correct his record. The cuts imposed by the federal government by then-Prime Minister Stephen Harper, supported by the Leader of the Opposition, are shortchanging Ontarians by \$8 billion in health care funding by 2023.

The Leader of the Opposition endorsed cuts to health care in Ontario when he was sitting in Ottawa. It's interesting that he has now changed his tune. Those are real cuts, Speaker. Those are real dollars. Now he's saying that this year \$54 million from the Canada Health Transfer will be funneled away from health care for Ontarians. It is absolutely inaccurate to make that claim. Every single dollar we receive from the Canada Health Transfer goes to health care in Ontario.

I have a copy of public accounts here, and I would happily pass this over—maybe the critic will take this. What you'll see, if you actually read this, is that on page 82 of public accounts, the Canada Health Transfer did increase. It increased by \$468 million. We are grateful for that increase. We wish it would continue to increase at that rate, but it has been slashed. We'll see what the

new government does. So we did receive an additional \$468 million.

Then, if you look on page 88, you'll see that our health spending increased by over a billion dollars, a \$1.104-billion increase. So to claim that we did not put every penny of the increase in the Canada Health Transfer into the health care budget is absolutely inaccurate. I'm sure that when he gets the chance, the critic will want to correct the record on that, Speaker.

As I said, Ontarians deserve to have the best health care system. They also deserve to have the facts. When people in this place play politics with the truth, I have a real problem with that. I think we should all agree on what the facts are. They're published in public accounts. I think it's irresponsible and simply wrong for opposition parties to make up numbers that simply are not accurate. So I look forward to that.

The motion goes on to say that we've cut \$815 million from physician services. That is absolutely inaccurate. It is simply untrue. We are increasing compensation to physicians by 1.25% this year and next year. We're continuing to increase the overall line for payments to physicians.

We heard from the critic of the third party about the relationship between government and doctors. I can tell you, there's nothing more troubling to me in all of this discussion than that relationship. I have met with many, many doctors in my riding. I have spoken to many, many over the phone. You know what? When you take the time to talk to physicians—and I'm sure the physicians in the gallery today would agree—we actually could get better value for the money that we spend in health care generally and in that physician services line.

So we're increasing compensation to physicians as the budget's going up by 1.25%. There are more people to care for; we're adding 700 more doctors each and every year—I understand that. But we tried very, very hard to work with the OMA through over a year of negotiations to actually come to an understanding of what changes we could make so that we could have a sustainable health care system that delivered the health care that people need to rely on.

We actually had 75 different proposals that we tabled during those negotiations with the OMA to say, "What about this? What about this? What about this?" We wanted to work collaboratively with the OMA. Not only did they not respond to any of our 75 ideas of how to get better value for those monies so we wouldn't need to do a rollback; they brought a grand total of zero new ideas to the table.

So when doctors say that they want to work with government to make our health care system stronger and more sustainable, that is a two-way street. We need doctors to actually participate in the strengthening of our health care system. Every single meeting that I have had with a physician in my office in London—every single meeting—physicians have ideas on how we can do better with the money that we have.

The reality, Speaker, is that we have a finite amount of money to spend on health care. Every additional dollar

that we spend increasing compensation for physicians is a dollar we cannot spend on the other issues that matter to people. Our doctors are well paid; they should be well paid. They work very hard. They're very highly trained. We are enormously proud of the work they do, but our precious dollars need to go where they're going to make a real difference for people. When we spend more on one part of the system, it means, by definition, we have to spend less in another part of our system. There is no magic pot of money. We have to be very careful about how we support the health care transformation that is under way. If we want more people getting home care in a more timely way, we have to find that money somewhere.

I've asked doctors, I've said, "Give me the top 10 things you think our health care system needs to deliver better care." Doctors have really good ideas on what we need to spend more on. Not once has physician compensation been on the top-10 list of investments they think we should make. Doctors know—and it disturbs me a lot that doctors are getting distorted information from the OMA about what is happening here—that we are determined to make a measurable improvement in our health care system so that people get the care they need when they need it.

There is significant transformation under way in our health care system—as there should be. We are really working to deliver the right care at the right place at the right time. We are taking people from hospitals and finding them places to live in the community.

I heard about a young man not far from where I live in London who had been in an intensive care unit for 16 months because he needed mechanical ventilation. Now he's living in a group home. Can you imagine living in an intensive care unit? Can you imagine having your food, your visitors—the lights on all the time for 16 months? We are now starting to move people into a much better place for them.

1630

One of the foundations of the transformation that's under way is that if people need to be in the hospital, we need them to be in the hospital getting the best possible care. But if they can be cared for in the community, outside of the hospital, then we need to make those investments to get people out of the hospital and into their own home.

We are working very hard to make the changes in our health care system so that it is sustainable. The reality is, we have a marvellous health care system, but we have to make changes if we actually want to deliver the best possible care. So we do have priorities. Everyone here knows that we are running a significant deficit in this province. We are working very hard to reach balance or are committed to doing that by 2017-18. We're doing that because we want to be able to invest in the services that matter to people.

So we have had to look very hard at our health care spending, but the suggestion that we're firing nurses is simply wrong. We have 24,000 more nurses working in

Ontario now than we did a decade ago—24,000 more. Are they all in hospital? No. They're in the community. They're delivering service where people want to be, and that is in their own home.

We heard quite a sad story about the process by which we arrived at physician compensation. When I was Minister of Health in 2012, we had a very difficult negotiation. In the end, though, we did come together, and we set in place a process to resolve if we arrived at an impasse in the future, because neither the OMA nor the government ever wanted to go through that again.

So we worked hard. We put in a plan that was agreed upon by the OMA and by the government. It was a signed agreement. The process was this: First, we tried to negotiate ourselves; we tried to reach that agreement. If that failed, we would bring in a third party, agreed to by both sides, to actually look at what was going on and provide advice on what the way forward was.

This time around, we had to do that. David Naylor came in and wrote a report. We went back to the table following that. We were, again, unable to reach an agreement after that, so there was another third party that came in: Justice Winkler. In this case, Justice Winkler—that report was made public. I hope people have read that report because it does outline a number of excellent—he gives a lot of excellent advice that we are trying to implement, but he did say to the OMA, “Please accept this deal because it's a good deal.” He said to the government, “Do not change your final offer.” Justice Winkler said, “Government, don't change your offer; OMA, accept your offer, but you've got a lot of work to do, and you'll only be able to do that work if you work together.” That's exactly what we've done.

So the notion that this was an agreement imposed—I think we heard “the big boots from the government.” That is not at all what happened. Justice Winkler gave us that advice.

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll happily send you a copy, the member from North Bay, of Justice Winkler's report where he says, “This is a good deal. Take this deal,” he says to the OMA. “Take the deal.”

Speaker, I'm getting a note that I am supposed to wrap up because I know that many of my colleagues have stories they want to tell about moves from hospital and other things. So I will leave it at that.

I want to say to the physicians in the gallery that we enormously respect you. We want you serving patients. I implore you to read Justice Winkler's report. There's a lot of transformation we need to do to provide the best possible care for our patients, and you need to be part of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Two things before we continue: I'd like to remind a couple of members from the third party that when you leave the chamber or come in, you acknowledge the Chair, and when you walk across the floor in front of the Chair, you nod and acknowledge the Chair. That's not being done. I must compliment the government: They've been doing it on a regular basis.

Further to that, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business, such that Ms. MacLeod assumes ballot item number 13 and Mr. McNaughton assumes ballot item number 32.

Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up and speak on behalf of our motion—and thankful the Liberal propaganda machine has been shut down for the time being, because what she has just been speaking about has been utter spin.

I do have to make note—and hopefully the doctors are listening to this. Two weeks ago, this government spent the time vilifying the doctors of this province. That tack is not working because doctors have banded together and patients are starting to see their services cut. Today, they've taken a new tack: “Let's vilify OMA and try to divide the doctors.” I hope the doctors today will note that this government will try to take apart the OMA so they can take total control of the health care system. I'm hoping that they stick with OMA and don't listen to the propaganda being put forth by this government.

Health care is a provincial government's most important responsibility. Our health, and the health of our families, is dependent upon timely access to quality care. This government, unfortunately, continues to erode the fragile system with cut after cut to health care.

Let me put forward the truth about the cuts to the health care system. Maybe I can list a few truths here today that can be taken to the record. There was \$54 million cut from the federal health transfer from the Canadian government; \$815 million was cut from doctor services, although the government claims that that never occurred; and \$50 million was cut from physiotherapy. They eliminated 50 medical resident positions, and thankfully, the government didn't deny that. They agree: They cut the 50 resident positions. They've cut 800,000 nursing hours, and they've established this province with 800,000 people without a doctor.

But to top it all off, this government said today in question period that they're taking the money from the doctors to put into home care, to create more home care. However, the Auditor General stated in her report two weeks ago that 40% of that money goes to the bureaucracy. So what this government is doing is taking the money out of the funding envelope for doctors to provide services for health care and giving it to the bureaucrats throughout the CCAC system. It doesn't reach the front-line health care professionals. It doesn't reach the patients.

The other thing that we've brought up during this debate is: Where has the money gone? Why? Why are they cutting health care? Why are there cuts coming to the front-line professionals? Why are there cuts and the freezing of budgets throughout the hospital system? We found out, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps I could shed some light on where some of this money has gone.

They've spent \$7 million on their consultants for the Hydro One sale. They've spent \$4 million for a Hydro

One CEO; \$5.7 million to pay out the Pan Am executives; \$6.5 million to pay consultants to sell Ontario, in which the province lost millions of dollars; \$2 billion to implement the smart meters throughout this province; \$2 billion on our eHealth system—a system in which they're not even able to communicate with one another; and \$1.1 billion on the gas plants.

This is a government with four OPP investigations open and one charge already laid for somebody related to the Premier's office. This a government that's going to tell Ontario doctors that they're all wrong, that the opposition parties are all wrong? They are a government under investigation from the Ontario Provincial Police. We can't believe them, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I'm focusing on the severity of the cuts this government has imposed on Ontario physicians—physicians who are critical to our health care system, the first touch point for any patient entering the system, the gatekeepers to access many other systems as they develop sickness. These cuts are short-sighted. We're going to end up with longer wait times and reduced access to care for Ontario's patients.

Even before these cuts occurred, many communities throughout Ontario have had doctor shortages. Less than half of adults are able to see a doctor or primary care provider within two days when they are sick, and what the government doesn't understand is that by cutting the \$815 million that they say they're not cutting, they're punishing not only doctors, they're punishing the patients throughout this province.

The government's decision to cut funding will lead to the loss of jobs for front-line health care services and force the closure of much-needed walk-in clinics and addiction clinics. Of note, we've already had three addiction clinics close in Toronto and we're only at week three of the cuts.

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Just last week, Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital re-admission rates for patients with mental illness and addictions have not improved in five years, and suicide rates have not improved in a decade. Our cuts to doctor services are creating greater barriers for those with mental illness to access treatment and support services. We need to do better for our most vulnerable.

These cuts may lead to the closure of walk-in clinics, resulting in patients who typically use walk-in clinics to misuse urgent emergency room services. That is a significant cost to the health care system.

These unilateral cuts will further impact care in the future, as doctors retire or leave the province to work in other jurisdictions. This government's refusal to work with our doctors is only worsening the issue. The doctor perspective is critical to the modernization of our fragmented and failing health care system. They must work with the experts in the sector to find solutions, not take the time to vilify them and impose contracts upon them.

How will these effects affect our patients? We will see it in orthopaedic surgery. There have been many doctors

I've talked to. We talked about one today. I was talking about the wait times and the fact that people are waiting two to three years for our cuts, and the fact that this government does not even come close to funding the necessity for orthopaedic surgery. In my riding alone, at the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital, orthopaedic knee and hip replacements are ended 10 months into the year because there's no more funding to maintain the year. I talked to the LHIN about it. The LHIN said our doctors are too efficient; they should stretch out their dollars for the whole 12 months. I'm saying, let's utilize and get these patients through the surgery. Let's get them better. Let's get them active and walking again instead of making them wait longer and longer.

Unfortunately, this government is not seeing what's going on.

In emergency rooms, there are not enough beds. Patients are ending up dying in the ER waiting for a bed. The doctors need to be there to focus on emergency cases. They can't be preoccupied with refilling prescriptions because people don't have access to a doctor.

We need to ensure there's investment in long-term care, of which this government has done zero in their whole decade and two years of being in government. They've neglected long-term care, which is causing our hospital beds to be filled with people who should be in long-term care, using up the money. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this government still doesn't get it.

Earlier, I mentioned addiction and mental health and the number of clinics that have already closed. A study given to the government just a few years ago showed that \$44,000 per addicted person per year is the cost to our system when they aren't being treated. How are we going to rectify that cost being added to the system when this government is slashing services to those addicted throughout this province? It's unfortunate that this government is going in that direction.

I'd also like to talk about graduates, residents. Today we had Brenna Velker release her study. She's a medical resident. She did a study throughout all the residents throughout Ontario, through a couple of groups. Not all of them responded, but she had a good number who quantified it. Before the government cuts, Ontario residents were surveyed—what is it that most likely they want to stay and work in Ontario. Some 90% said they want to stay. After the cuts: "How are you feeling? Do you think you're going to want to stay in the province of Ontario after you're done your residency?" Only 33% said they would stay. That's a 60% change over the cost of what this government is doing.

If they think that doctors are going to stay, if they think they're going to deal with the shortage of doctors throughout this province, they have another thing coming. These doctors are going to leave, and this is after the government of Ontario put so much money into their education system.

It is unbelievable that this government has taken the strong hand, the big boot, as the NDP have said, to this government. It's unfortunate that they're heading down this direction.

What we need to do is find a way to ensure that we have sustainability in our health care system. This government is working year to year just to ensure their deficit doesn't swell and bloat. They say they've increased physician services by 1.2%, but they know full well that the health care system naturally grows over 2% a year, so they're underfunding the natural growth—the baby boomers entering the system, the 140,000 new patients who enter the system. They're not even looking at—in case we have another SARS, a flu outbreak. How are they going to afford that? Is that going to be a further cut down to doctors?

When the government comes forth and says they've set a budget—a cap like David Peterson did back when the Liberals were last in government—on doctor services, what's going to happen when they reach that budget threshold? They won't give a direct answer. They won't give the doctors ongoing reports to say where they are with respect to the budget, so they can make modifications. They're just going to show up one day with their cheque coming through from OHIP to pay for the services they delivered three months ago, and they'll be clawed back, saying, "You've overbilled the province. We need to take the money back, because we're too busy making scandals in this government. We're too busy being under OPP investigations to ensure that health care is funded for the people of Ontario."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to see the Leader of the Opposition bring this motion forward today. This government's cuts to our health care system are putting patients at risk. That means our seniors are at risk, our children are at risk, and we are at risk. I'm also very happy to see that so many doctors are here today.

Before I get into my speech, I want to thank each and every one of you for the work you do every day. I know that without doctors like you, I would not be standing here today to give this speech, and I mean that literally. In my past, I had a very serious, life-threatening health condition, and without the great work of doctors, nurses and support staff, I wouldn't be here right now. I know that the doctors who are listening know what it is. I had a mechanical valve put in my heart, which is very interesting. It goes, "click, click, click, click," when it's quiet. I'm on warfarin.

I guess my question to the parties over here, when it comes to the doctors having contracts imposed on them, is: When a CEO of Hydro One is paid \$4.3 million per year, are you trying to tell me that doctors aren't more valuable than a CEO of Hydro One? You deserve to be treated better. You deserve to be treated with respect. From the bottom of my heart, from myself and my family, I say thank you very much to the doctors for what you do every day.

The Liberal government's short-sighted decisions on health care have caused chaos. The cuts have left 800,000

people without a family doctor, the cuts have left people in remote communities struggling to get the care they need, and the cuts have resulted in nurses and doctors leaving Ontario to find work elsewhere. I know that, on days, this government will willingly admit they made these cuts, but that doesn't come very often. They spend that time blaming the federal government, the Conservatives over there. Well, I think it's safe to say that we are going to see a lot less of that now. And it's a good thing, because we all know that what is really causing these cuts is a government wasting millions of dollars to cover up scandals.

Some of those scandals, like eHealth and Ornge, are related to our health care system, but more of them are not—the gas plant cover-up and the recent Sudbury by-election. This government has taken money out of our front-line services and used it to cover up. Instead of protecting the interests of Ontarians and making sure they have the health care they need, they have protected the interests of their party and made sure they have the votes they need.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the Liberal Party. The cuts to health care have a serious impact in my own riding. Ten years ago, the town of Fort Erie was booming. Its population was growing, and its economy was growing. Thankfully, it still has one of the best tracks for horse racing anywhere in world. It had a fully functional hospital. The people of Fort Erie really liked having that hospital in town. It meant they didn't have to drive 45 minutes down the highway to an emergency ward. It meant that babies made in Fort Erie could be delivered in Fort Erie. In fact, they liked their hospital so much that they had fundraisers and purchased equipment for the hospital. That's right, folks: The people of Fort Erie used their own money to buy equipment for a hospital when their government wouldn't.

What do you think was the government's response to it? Do you think they congratulated the people of Fort Erie? Do you think they realized their mistake and actually purchased the equipment that was needed for our doctors? Do you think they learned from this and made sure other hospitals had the funding they needed? I wish I could stand here today and tell you that they did all of those things, but I can't.

What I can tell you is that they closed the Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie. They closed the hospital and took the equipment to St. Catharines. Let me say that again. This government took the equipment that the people of Fort Erie paid for themselves with their own hard-earned money and shifted it 45 minutes down the highway to a new hospital in St. Catharines.

As I've already said, that put people at risk. Fort Erie is a town that has been hit hard in the last 10 years, as manufacturers moved out of the province. It's a town that needs to attract more people to increase its tax base, and now it's a town that has no hospital. How is that going to help it grow?

1650

Simply put, from closing the hospitals to removing slots from Fort Erie Race Track, this government has put

hardship after hardship on the backs of the people of Fort Erie. Rather than helping their community grow, the government has made it harder for them. It's time this government started reversing their cuts and helping Fort Erie become the booming town that it was before.

Let's talk about Niagara Falls. I'll tell a quick story about Niagara Falls because I only get so many minutes here. Some 14 million people go to Niagara Falls for their honeymoon; it's the honeymoon capital of the world. Guess what they do there? They make babies. That's what they do: They go to Niagara Falls and they make babies. Guess what we can't do in Niagara Falls? Because they took the maternity ward out of the hospital, we can't deliver the babies. They have to go to St. Catharines. Does that make sense to anybody? Absolutely not. What does that do?

Our health care cuts are hurting my riding. My riding has more seniors than just about anywhere else in the province. After all, we have, in my slightly biased opinion, the best place to retire in the province, not to mention the fabulous wines, the craft beer, the natural beauty, right in the heart of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

However, having a large seniors' population has its challenges, as well. Of course, the main challenge is that we need to be able to provide health care for seniors who live in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and everywhere in between. You shouldn't have to drive 45 minutes to get to a hospital.

Mr. Speaker, maybe you're one of the lucky individuals who is still able to see a community nurse without having to go to the hospital. Well, unfortunately, for those nurses who have also been impacted by the Liberal government's cuts to our health care system—and this is a story I think we should listen to; I want the doctors to listen because they can really relate to it. The nurses of OPSEU Local 289 have been on strike for six months now. This government decided to privatize the services that Local 289 provides in order to save a few bucks as part of their cuts.

Now, the private company, owned by Linda Knight, that has taken over is paying these nurses a wage they can't even make a living on. Now, think about this: Her company is bringing in nurses from across the province, putting them up in hotels, paying for their meals, all the while saying that they can't afford to pay nurses properly. I encourage the health minister—and I wish he was here—to fix this injustice against the workers and the community and, quite frankly, the patients that are there.

And you wonder—I know I got a few minutes left—why we have a crisis in health care? Let's talk about why we have a crisis, why they're looking at cutting—outside of some of the scandals that you have had. Let's take a look at what we've done with the money, because I keep hearing how we put more and more money into health care. Well, it's not true. The money is going to health care, but where is it going?

Let's talk about the LHINs. They put the LHINs together, so the money is going to the LHINs. What do

the LHINs do? They have executives, they have CEOs; they have all these people. Then, what do they do with the LHINs? They make a decision to put an envelope together, and to give that envelope to CCACs which then have their own boards and their own workers. Again, taking the money—first it goes to the LHINs, then it goes to CCACs. So now what they do is, the CCAC, in my case in Niagara—guess what they decide to do? They contract the work out to a company called CarePartners which is a for-profit company that runs health care, and what do they do? They put those workers in and they pay them \$15 an hour, and it's actually closer to piecework for a nurse in the province of Ontario.

Now, think about it. You guys know what I'm talking about. They go into the homes of these people. They have diabetes, they have serious problems and they're being paid \$15, and they've got nine or 12 minutes—

Interruption.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm not talking to you, sir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please. You know you can't talk to the gallery; you're supposed to talk to me. Thank you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just showing a little bit of passion there.

I want to say to everybody that that is the problem. CarePartners decided to put them out on strike, at the expense of the patients, at the expense of my community in Niagara, and not just Niagara Falls, in St. Catharines, Thorold and everywhere they service. Why did they do it? Because they're getting the dollars to provide the service; they did it because they didn't want them to have a collective agreement. It's the first collective agreement. They wanted to break the union there. I think the Liberal government should be ashamed of themselves and what they are doing there.

The nurses have said, "That's not enough. We deserve to be able to live with our jobs. We deserve to be treated with the respect we have earned." But that's not what this government is doing. From our doctors to our nurses, to all others who work so hard to make our health care system great, this government has turned up their noses and said, "No. No, we won't give you the funding you need. No, we won't pay you a fair salary. And no, we don't have the money."

I just explained to you that it's not a money issue; it's how you distribute the envelope. The envelope has to go to front-line workers. It has to go to the nurses. It would have to go to the doctors and the support workers, and when you finally realize that that's what has to happen to health care in the province of Ontario, it will be a lot better for our seniors, our kids and our grandkids.

Thank you very much for giving me a couple of minutes of your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to this opposition motion. I want to start out by saying this motion is inaccurate, misleading and absurd. In addition, I can't believe that the opposition—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member will withdraw the word that starts with M, "misleading."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stand up and withdraw.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I withdraw.

In addition, I can't believe that the opposition leader is bringing forward this motion, when it was the Harper government, of which he was a member, that was responsible for major cuts to Ontario's health care funding. In fact, the cuts imposed by Harper and supported by him will shortchange Ontarians, as the President of the Treasury Board said earlier, by \$8 billion in health care funding by 2023.

The fact of the matter is, contrary to the opposition leader's inaccurate claims, every single dollar we receive from the Canada Health Transfer goes toward health care in Ontario. As the President of the Treasury Board mentioned earlier, if one looks at our public accounts from last year and compares it to our budget 2015 projections, there is no \$54-million gap that the opposition leader claims exists. In fact, there is more than \$100 million in additional funding. So I don't quite understand why the Leader of the Opposition continues to make this bizarre accusation. The math is, frankly, simple, and it is readily available.

Mr. Speaker, this government has nothing but respect and admiration for Ontario's doctors, for the incredibly hard work that they do, day in and day out, for the exceptional care that they provide for our sick and our vulnerable. They are the backbone of our health care system, and their role in making Ontario a world leader in high-quality and efficient health care is immeasurable. In fact, doctors are often the face of Ontario's health care system, and I want to thank them for that.

But I have to say that there is no full frontal assault on health care. If there was an assault, it happened when the party opposite reduced services in the obstetrics ward in my local hospital when my daughter was born. In fact, it happened, and my daughter had to be delivered at another hospital several miles away as a New Year's baby. She was Milton's New Year's baby, but she was actually delivered in Oakville. In addition, if there was an assault on our health care system, it happened when that party opposite referred to our nurses as being obsolete, as obsolete as hula hoops. That is one of the most disrespectful things, I have to say, I've ever heard in my life being referred to when it comes to health care workers.

Finally, when you talk about frontal assaults and assaults on our health care system, let's talk about the dozens of hospitals that they closed. In my riding alone, the residents of Halton are able to now access three hospitals that are undergoing major renovations. The Oakville-Trafalgar hospital is now under way, almost completed, with more than \$1 billion in investments in there. The Milton District Hospital has a \$500-million renovation going on right now, and Joseph Brant Hospital has a major renovation going on. We are putting

money into the health care system. It is making a difference when it comes to the quality of health care that is being delivered in this province.

Now, there's no question that Ontario's doctors deserve to be fairly compensated for the work that they do. But it should be remembered that this is not your typical salary or wage discussion. Doctors bill for every service they provide, so, in effect, they can determine their salary, and our job is to set and manage the budget. We have increased payments to physicians by more than 60% over the last decade. As a result, the average doctor in Ontario is paid approximately \$350,000 a year. Ontario's doctors are among the best-paid in Canada. That is one of the reasons that the number of physicians in Ontario will grow by 13% by 2021, almost tripling the rate of Ontario's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Thornhill.

1700

Mrs. Gila Martow: I would ask the member to correct what doctors are paid on average. That would mean a salary—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Thornhill, I'll inform you that it's not your position to ask for a correction. If the member feels she's made a mistake, she can correct her own record. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'll correct it and say "compensation," Mr. Speaker.

This year alone, Ontario will add 700 net new doctors. Ontario remains a great province in which to live and practise medicine, and we are confident that physicians here will continue to choose to practise here. Why? Because our doctors know that our province has a great health care system funded by our government.

I've lived in several places over the years. I've lived in Africa, I've lived in the US, and I know that every time I return to this province and this country, I am struck by the amazing health care system that we have. We take care of our people; we take care of our friends and neighbours when they're having a hard time. I'm proud to say that I live in Ontario and that we fund a world-class, sensitive health care system. I am proud to say that this is a province where we are taking care of our citizens.

Finally, this motion from the Leader of the Opposition is simply a bizarre exercise in false accusations. Ontario's health care system is among the best in the world, and our government remains fully committed to keeping it that way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, would like to echo my appreciation for doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, PSWs, anyone involved in our health care system.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Pharmacists.

Mr. Bill Walker: Pharmacists; absolutely. I was going to get to you next. The system is fabulous, but we always have to be making sure that the patient is at the front of the line.

It's a pleasure to speak on behalf of my party and to speak to my leader Patrick Brown's opposition motion. To my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek—Jeff is our health critic. He's also a practical, successful, entrepreneurial pharmacist and a very effective legislator. When he stands in the House I know he does his homework and he actually talks from the front lines because he is a guy out there providing care along with his family and has been for many years.

Mr. Speaker, before I start, I have to share with you that I take exception to the Deputy Premier, who stood up in this House and in one way or another basically said that they're the only party that cares about people; they're the only people who care about health care. I came to this place because of health care. Every day I'm in here I think about health care. At one point, we will show her that they are not the only party that thinks they can govern on the health care card.

The member from Halton, who just spoke, talked about issues in her riding when her daughter was born. I want to suggest to her: They've had 12 years of being in power. What have they done to change any of that? Have they got those services back?

On a local basis, for the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound riding, they promised a hospital to our people and we had money in the bank to build 12 years ago and there still is not a shovel in the ground. Have they committed to it? Twice. Have we seen the action that it's actually going? Not yet. So I think she has to be very careful when she wants to bring those examples out.

Mr. Jim McDonell: The big sign's wearing out?

Mr. Bill Walker: The big sign got faded again, yes.

Sadly, the Liberal government cut \$54 million of the federal health transfer from Ontario's health care budget. They can spin it any way they want, but until they put the black and white in front of every single Ontario resident and show them that \$54 million truly went to front-line health care, we'll continue to challenge them on that.

They've slashed \$815 million from physician services. They've cut \$50 million from seniors for physiotherapy services. They've eliminated 50 medical residency positions. They've cut 800,000 nursing hours and there are 800,000 people without a doctor in this great province. These cuts are leading to longer and longer wait times for surgeries, doctor appointments and emergency room visits.

Just this morning, I asked a question in this House to the health minister about a cataract surgery that had gone from 120 days to 480 days—14 months. That's unacceptable. It's absolutely a shame and a crying shame for those people who are being told that is what their wait is going to be. People could lose their eyesight in that period of time. That's not a goal they should be proud of.

It's also leading to the largest loss of jobs in front-line care. Some 140,000 new patients are coming through our province every year and yet they're not even, as my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London said, keeping up to the 2% increase. So at some point there are going to have to be cuts, which they continue to make because they're not funding appropriately.

Finally, it's forcing closure of much-needed walk-in clinics and addiction clinics.

As we noted just a little while ago in the CCAC Auditor General's report, 40% of funding is going to bureaucracy as opposed to the front line, and an absolutely abysmal statistic: Less than 50% of patients receive a rapid response. That is simply unacceptable.

A big component of a lot of our ridings—certainly, my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—are seniors. When the Liberals were first elected to govern in 2003, they immediately abandoned their election promises. As their first order of business, Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government began privatizing health care services, quietly ushering in a two-tiered system. By 2004, access to eye vision tests and chiropractic and physiotherapy services were cut from OHIP coverage for most Ontarians under 65 years of age. I'm not certain when people under 65 stopped having all those concerns.

But along with these health cuts, they also brought in a new health tax, the McGuinty Liberal Ontario health premium of up to \$900 a month. I remember it vividly: "We will not raise taxes." That was one that happened under their leadership and one of the first things they did. This was the highest tax increase in Ontario's history and, yet again, another broken promise by a party that looked voters in the eyes and said, "We will not raise taxes one cent on Ontario families." I'll let the public wade in on that one and let us know whether they felt that was a tax and whether they actually did what they said.

A decade later and under a new leader now, the Liberal government continues with that same attitude, which is short-term pitches just to get elected and then, after the election, going back on their word. Shortly after the new leader and now Premier was elected two years ago, the Liberal Party's first order of business was to finish off the health cuts started by her predecessor.

Under Kathleen Wynne's leadership, the Liberals cut physiotherapy services for seniors by \$50 million. They cut diabetic strips. They cut nearly a billion dollars from physician services. They cut medical residency positions throughout the province. They cut hospital beds—40 beds were just cut last month up north; 140 more hospital staff were cut in September at the North Bay Regional Health Centre. North Bay, Ottawa, Quinte region, London, Scarborough, Peterborough, Sault Ste. Marie, Mississauga and Sudbury have all suffered job cuts under this Premier's watch.

We've experienced 1,800 nursing cuts since the Liberals came to power. They continue to say, "We've added more," but they never seem to take any of the ones that they've cut off of that number. At the end of the day, I believe most people in those communities know the truth. They know whether people have been cut from their front-line health care or not, and we'll let them be the judge.

In my own backyard—I've spoken about this often in this House—the restorative care unit at Chesley hospital is in jeopardy by this government. Again, this will result

in cuts somewhere along the line if they don't provide funding for that. It's a very entrepreneurial program. It's a new pilot program, and it's working very well to keep people out of hospital, from going back to emergency, which is exactly what this government tells us they want. They want more home care. They want people to stay in their home and get better care in their home. Yet, here is a program that's working to transition them from the hospital to their home, and they continue to try to put the blame on either the LHIN or on the local hospital administration. I can tell you that the local hospital administration has done everything it can in its power to keep that program viable and keep it operating. It's back on the shoulders of the health minister and/or their hatchet men, the LHIN, not the community.

Clearly, gutting health care services is a core part of the Liberal Party's business today. What is most galling is that this Premier is orchestrating health cutbacks while explicitly staking her integrity and her party's reputation on that single promise to protect these same services. What is left when integrity is lost, I ask.

Seniors suffering from disability or activity restriction need physiotherapy services to keep them in good health longer, improving mobility, independence and quality of life. Nursing and retirement homes are experiencing an increased number of falls and injuries among their residents. We're talking 80,000 senior citizens who live in long-term-care homes. Most of those people who have those falls end up in hospital, our most costly form of health care. Again, why aren't we being more preventive? Why aren't we keeping people more mobile? Then they don't have the same challenges that they're experiencing.

We should be taking measures to keep our aging population—these are our parents and our grandparents—healthy and out of hospital, rather than trying to rehabilitate them once they suffer an injury because they didn't have the care and services up front. Nowhere are cuts to physiotherapy more detrimental than to seniors living in rural areas like mine, where access to clinics and doctors is extra challenging.

Cuts to essential health care services are the result of the Liberals' economic mismanagement. Patients are suffering because they cut their health care to make up for the billions they've wasted on scandals. Might I name Ornge and eHealth as just two big boondoggles? They cannot sit across the aisle and tell us they have not impacted the care of Ontarians. That's money wasted that has done nothing for people's health care, and I challenge them to actually come back and have a conversation about those.

1710

Their incompetence and excessive bureaucracy—yes, there's a need for some administration, but it cannot be 40%, as was just reported in the Auditor General's report. How do they justify putting the squeeze on everyone but themselves? Where is their self-accountability?

My riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has one of the highest numbers of people aged 65 or older, and they are

living with more complex care needs every day. This population has been increasing at a rate of roughly 4% to 5% per year. Mr. Speaker, the number of seniors aged 65 and over is projected to more than double, as you are well aware. It will grow from almost 2.1 million people today, or 15.2% of the population, to over 4.5 million, or 25.5%, by 2041. Yet this Liberal government has created a crisis in the system by continuing to ignore this critical contingent.

After 12 years in power and countless reports on improving long-term-care standards in Ontario, the status quo remains and the long-term-care needs of our seniors continue to be unmet, this despite Liberal Party promises in every election since 2003 to bring in minimum care standards, build long-term-care beds and hire more staff to help residents with personal support.

Despite setting up a whole new ministry, a new bureaucracy and going through multiple ministers and associate ministers solely responsible for ensuring that the needs of our seniors living in long-term care are looked after, there were 70,850 long-term-care beds when you formed government in 2003, and today there are only a few thousand more beds—76,000, to be exact—but there are 100,000 more seniors. You didn't do your job.

I don't know how you justify spending billions on building new bureaucracies and hiring consultants to write report after report instead of building more beds and putting services in the front lines. You have over 21,000 seniors languishing on wait-lists. That means that in all of your 12 years in government, you managed to address only one in every five seniors in need of long-term care in Ontario. Shame on you.

Also, your failure to enact minimum standards of care in long-term-care homes is putting the lives of frail senior citizens at risk. It's important to note that 93% of long-term-care residents have two or more chronic illnesses, and more than 62% suffer from dementia. Ten years have passed since an inquest into two long-term-care deaths in Ontario made a specific recommendation to the government to bring in standards of care; namely, minimum hours of hands-on, direct patient care. Again, you have not done your job. The people of Ontario are suffering the consequences.

The Rural Ontario Institute reports that there is a clear urban-rural divide when it comes to our health status. Rural residents are less healthy than their urban counterparts; constituents from rural areas have higher overall mortality rates and shorter life expectancy and are also at disadvantages for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In fact, the 10 sickest regions in Canada are located in rural and isolated areas of Quebec, Saskatchewan and Ontario. The Liberal government knows that the health of rural communities is suffering, and they know that better investments in public health would help toward achieving a healthier population. Yet instead of defusing the urban-rural divide and instead of enhancing our programs, they cut public health in Grey Bruce Health Unit's budget, putting our constituents at an even greater disadvantage.

How do you justify pulling the plug on rural Ontario and decreasing our health care funding, while increasing it for the urban areas? Where is the equity in your public health policy? This cut also means that small municipalities will be forced to pick up the slack, or if they can't choose to do that or in fact do that, people's health will again be put at risk. This is starting to look a lot like provincial downloading.

Enough of the self-serving platitudes; someone on that side of the House needs to rise up and call a spade a spade and accept responsibility for your shortfalls. When it comes to living up to your responsibilities to protect Ontario's frail senior citizens, you have collectively been nothing short of a very, very bad failure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. I think we should be talking about health care every single day in this place. It's the biggest budget item for the province of Ontario, and clearly, a different version of events is being told here today.

I'm happy to see the doctors here. The nurses have come, the physiotherapists have come, the chiropractors have come and the dentists have come. This is an issue that affects every Ontarian, and I believe we have a moral responsibility to make sure that the money that is invested in the health care system is actually getting to the patients—to the citizens of this province—and I have evidence to prove that it's actually not getting to them.

The Deputy Premier was very fond of holding up the public accounts. Public accounts are an indication of the money that has been spent. It's interesting, though, that she left out, on page 13 of the public accounts, that in fact the health care sector expenses were \$42 million below plan, a lower spending in clinical education as well as some other programs. So there is a gap in this government saying that they are increasing the funding to health care, and then the public accounts indicating that what they are saying is actually not accurate.

In fact, there's a number of unbudgeted cuts that have come through post-budget as it relates to the public accounts, and they do come from health—as I mentioned, \$42 million; education, \$155 million; children's and social services, \$303 million; and post-secondary education and training, \$167 million. This actually adds up to a total of \$1.34 billion. So there is a good reason for us to question the numbers. I think, when you follow the money in this place, which, I have to admit, is not the easiest thing to do, it's a bit of a shell game, especially when the Auditor General for this province does not have access to third-party contracted-out health care services, so she can only do her due diligence, if you will, to a certain point.

It may be of interest to the people in the gallery and to the people watching that in the province of Ontario, right now, we are actually seeing an increase in the contracting out and privatization of health care. In Ontario's health care system, 68% is publicly provided. We are at 31% of health care services that are provided by the private

sector. This is a significant increase. In fact, no other province in the country is at this level. Canadians are spending now 37% more out of pocket on health care than they were in the 1990s, and as has been pointed out, 800,000 Ontarians do not have a family doctor. This is actually on the low end; it's anywhere between 800,000 and one million people in the province of Ontario. And there is a cost. There's a downstream cost to not having access to a doctor, because they actually assist people and direct people and patients to the systems of care that exist outside a family doctor's office.

So it's really interesting to hear the Minister of Health, day after day, get up in this House and say, "We are not cutting." Now the Deputy Premier has gotten up and said, "This is not true. We are not cutting." Yet we have evidence of cuts based on what's happening outside of this place. It may be shocking to people, but not everybody is focused on this Pink Palace. That's why we're really thankful when people actually come here. We need to pay more attention as to what is happening out in communities.

I have a number of news articles, media accounts, that are documenting the cuts. Last year: "Guelph Hospital Bed Cuts Look Like Service Reduction...."

"This seems more like a budget-motivated service cut that will oblige a larger and more complex caseload for an already very busy local public health care-providing team." In total, that was 15 beds.

In Kitchener-Guelph hospitals: "Up to 22 recovery beds may disappear at hospitals in Kitchener and Guelph as health care funding shifts to home care and nursing homes."

Obviously, the focus is to get people out of hospital. Of course we support that. We want people, if they're healthy, to leave a hospital, but they go to the community; they should be going home. But there's still that population, obviously, Mr. Speaker, that requires in-patient support.

In Cambridge: "Cambridge Hospital Laying Off 33 Nurses to 'Improve the Patient Experience.'" Nobody will ever believe a headline like this, that if you cut nursing—if you cut front-line care—your patient experience is going to get any better. In fact, we know—and we have evidence to prove it—that that experience gets worse. The head nurse at the time was Brenda Pugh from the Ontario Nurses' Association. She said, "Why are we diluting the skill set at the bedside?" If you dilute it, you weaken it. That's just the truth of the matter.

You heard the Deputy Premier sort of accuse the OMA of not coming to the table with creative options. If you listen to both sides of the argument, the cuts have already taken place. The system is already on a shoestring budget, and the side of the story that the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Health refuse to acknowledge is that doctors are operating offices and have expenses and overhead. They're small employers, and they have clerks and they have administrative staff and they have overhead. And now they have wait-lists because people cannot get into these doctors' offices.

1720

The Auditor General of this province has raised the red flag on where the money is going in the province of Ontario. I'm so thankful to have this document. For those of you who are watching, it's important for you to know that the Auditor General is an independent officer of this Legislature. It is a non-partisan document. She has gone through the financial documents, including the public accounts, inasmuch as she can, to find out where the money is going with regard to CCACs. In the document that just came out in September of this year, they have concluded that the way in which CCACs operate and deliver services needs to be revisited. The reason why it needs to be revisited is that—and this is quite astounding to me—neither the ministry nor the CCACs and their association had analyzed how given amounts of spending on any given patient-care activities correlate with the patient outcomes that result. Such analysis would help CCACs prioritize their spending, allocating sufficient resources and funds to the most efficient patient-care activities.

This is a \$2.4-billion budget item which has become the catch-all for an already fragmented health care system. Instead of actually addressing some of the core issues that are facing our health care professionals, this government—this goes back five years—has never done a financial analysis of where the money is going, how the money is being spent, who is profiting from these investments.

She does indicate, on page 14, that the costs that CCACs considered to be for direct patient care included items that did not involve direct interaction with patients, such as service providers' overhead and profit. Somewhere along the lines in the province of Ontario, the profit margin for a third-party care operator became considered direct patient care. That is a broken system. That is why you have the funding pressures that you have right now in the health care sector.

You also have those health care sector pressures because 25% of health care costs in Canada, and obviously in Ontario, are spent on treating patients in the last year of their life. The aging population—15% of Ontarians are 65 and over. This was a 2012 stat. It's expected to increase dramatically over the next few decades.

I'd like to just conclude with a story. This summer, the Globe and Mail did an exposé on where the money is going with regard to CCACs. They met a woman, Jennifer Sewell, who told her story about how she had a cyst removed from her body. She was sent home for home care, but she didn't know that when she got home she had to actually drive to a clinic to get the wound serviced. That's not home care. If you get sent home from a hospital and you have an open wound on your body, then someone should come and treat that wound. That's why it's called home care. Anyway, it was a terrible experience for her. She shared her story. This not a solitary story, Mr. Speaker, and that's the most unfortunate part about this.

It seems to me that this government is creating these mini crises all throughout the health care system and then relying on the private sector to answer the call. Well, the Minister of Health has a responsibility for patient care in this province. Doctors are a key part of that equation, and a unilateral collective agreement which has never been negotiated or agreed on is not going to work for the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I appreciate the time this afternoon. I'll be sharing my time that is left on the clock with the Minister of Transportation.

We find ourselves in the middle of a labour situation, and it's clear that the opposition has brought forward this motion to try to leverage some support, either with the public or with the medical community or both, and use the current situation as an opportunity to gain some advantage. It's a labour negotiation situation. It's not a war, but I would say that in a war, as the axiom goes, the first victim of a war is the truth. This is not a war; this is a labour situation. But sometimes in labour situations it's hard for people to know exactly what it is and what's going on.

An old friend of mine once said to me, "Bill, always remember"—it was when I was first elected in 2003, early on—"health care is a political loser." If you stop and you think about it for a little while, it doesn't take long to figure out what he meant. It simply says that no matter how much you do as a government, no matter how much you invest, no matter how many nurses you hire or doctors you hire or nurse practitioner clinics you open or bring in new practice models like family health teams, no matter what you do or how high the budget goes, you will always find instances—because it's like a \$50-billion budget—where there will be pieces of it that people can pick at and create anxiety over within the health care professionals themselves and within the broader general public.

That's exactly what he meant. It's easy to understand, and it's true. If you go to an emergency room and you're with your mother or your grandmother and you have to wait longer than half an hour, you're going to get fired up and you're going to think that the health care system is failing you. If you live in a community that doesn't have enough doctors so that everybody has access to primary care, you're going to think that the system is failing you—understood. But just because those situations exist, it does not mean that the system is failing; it just means there is more work to do. It doesn't mean that as a government we haven't enhanced the system from what existed when we came here in 2003.

I think what I would say to our friends that are in the gallery today—and I welcome them and I thank them for being here—at the end of the day, when all is said and done, instead of worrying about this bit of money and that bit of money and that it's hard for everybody to know, I would tell you to step back and just remember some larger numbers. Remember that there are over 5,000 more doctors working in the province today.

Nobody argues it. Remember that there are over 24,000 more nurses, give or take, working in the province today than when we came in in 2003. When the official opposition was in government they fired 6,000, and when the NDP were in government, at the end of their reign, there were 3,000 fewer nurses working in the province of Ontario. Those are simple numbers to remember.

They made decisions when they were in government. I'm not even here necessarily to criticize what they did, but only remember that we went through the greatest recession since the Great Depression and we were still making those investments in health care.

At the end of the day, I would ask our friends in the gallery, and anybody in the general public who's listening to this, if you would just step back and compare. That's all. If you want to deal with this issue and this issue only, maybe you won't leave here satisfied today. I'm not even going to speak a lot about this particular issue today. But just think about what happened from 1990 to 1995, because you have a comparator, and then think about what happened from 1995 to 2003. Nobody is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I remind the minister that he is to talk to me, not to the gallery. Thank you.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I appreciate that.

I do want to stay focused on the issue at hand, and I think I am. But I think it's fair, I think it's very fair to ask people that are seized with this issue—including medical professionals, including young medical professionals—that perhaps the best way for you to leave is with an opinion about what's been going on in the health care system since 2003, not just today. As I said, it's \$50 billion. Because you know what? Next week, there will be another issue and somebody will find something to pick at in a \$50-billion ministry. They'll find something. It doesn't mean that it won't be legitimate, but \$50 billion provides ample opportunity for opposition parties to find something to critique in the system. It doesn't mean they're wrong. Oftentimes on this side, we will agree, but at the same time, you'll hear the opposition say, "Well, we've got to cut taxes. That's the only way you're going to make things work." And then they'll stand up and say "But you've got to hire more of this and you've got to invest in more of this. And I need a new hospital in my community."

Speaker, I want to just give you a few examples, but before I go on about our investments, I would ask the people that are seized with this issue, including the medical professionals here today—you heard the former Minister of Health and the current Minister of Health today describe the process as it has unfolded—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'll remind the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington that he cannot ask if someone is here or not.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I didn't.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, you did. And if you want to make comments, I suggest you get back in your seat.

Mr. Steve Clark: But I like him, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I don't really care what you like. I don't like it.

Continue.

1730

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

We have heard the former Minister of Health today and the current Minister of Health on a number of occasions describe for the medical community and the public who are interested in this issue the process described by the third party as us putting a boot on the throat of the doctors in this community.

You heard them both describe at length that in the previous agreement, there was an agreement contained in that agreement around a dispute resolution mechanism that would be kicked into place should we not be able to find an agreement. They've clearly stated that. If anybody over there says that that's wrong, then stand up and say that that's wrong and it's not accurate. I want the people who are here in the gallery and the people following this on television today to understand that that's the case. You've heard two—one a former minister and one the current minister—on a number of occasions articulate that point. We are not imposing anything; we're following what was agreed to in the previous agreement. Judge Winkler said, very clearly, "Here's the deal. I'm the conciliator. This is following the dispute resolution process that's in place, and here it is. It's a good deal."

Why has nobody responded to the fact that the OMA did not respond to any of the 75 recommendations to find savings so that the 1.25% cut didn't have to come in? Why not? I've got a good theory on it. I'm not going to share it today, but I've got a really good theory on it. Maybe—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Oh, share. Share.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Last warning to the member from Lanark. You may think it's a joke. You're having a great laugh over there. It stops now.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Thank you, Speaker.

Orphaned patients is a very serious and legitimate issue. There are still too many people in the province of Ontario who do not have access to primary care, and it does have downstream implications for what happens in our communities. People have poorer health outcomes, they present to the emergency rooms—it's a very serious issue. I heard somebody talking about it previously.

In my community of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, when I was elected in 2003, there were 35,000, give or take, orphaned patients in my community—35,000—we know who was in government from 1995 to 2003; that was almost like one in four of the people who lived in my community. Today the number is 13,000. If you're one of those 13,000 people, you're still not going to be happy; I get that. I'm not satisfied yet. But look me in the eye and tell me that 20,000-plus people having access to primary care isn't significant progress. You won't hear anybody

stand on this side of the aisle and say, "We've got it all right and we've made it perfect." But, Speaker, my goodness, there has been tremendous progress, and I remind people again of the context in which these investments have occurred.

I've got way here more that I want to say, but I can't, because the Minister of Transportation is waiting. But I remind people of the context in which these investments have occurred. We went through the greatest recession since the Great Depression. The easy out for us was to fire nurses and not to hire doctors. Even though demand was growing, even though we had an aging population and an expanding population, it does not necessarily mean we automatically had to hire more doctors, but we did. And we made those investments when government revenues were severely challenged as a result of that recession.

Speaker, I'm just trying to provide some context for some of the work that we've done. I wish I could use the last nine minutes, but I know my friend on the right is going to have some things to add to this as well. I thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that the key today, the fact that we're visited by all of the doctors that I really appreciate came down today, is that the doctors feel disrespected. They don't feel valued, and I have to agree with them.

If you go to school for an average of 11 years, post-secondary, and you have huge debt—and you didn't just go to school; you were working for practically minimum wage, training in hospitals. You were very competitive in high school to get the marks to get into medical school, and everything that you've dedicated your life to—you care about your patients; you care about your staff; you care about your neighbourhood and your families. We know so many doctors who also volunteer in their communities. They're community-minded people.

But they also deserve our respect and the respect of their patients as well as the government and all the bureaucracies. When the doctors are being told, "More money is being put into health care, but we are cutting your service fees," they are insulted. It's plain and simple. They are insulted, because, yes, they understand that the population is aging. They understand that there are new treatments that are more expensive, that patients are living longer, that we can do more for our patients to keep them living longer with a better quality of life, but that it costs. They expect the government to plan for this.

They don't expect to see money wasted on eHealth when the government could have very easily gone to Alberta. I implemented the electronic health records in a medical clinic myself. I know it's not easy; I know it's expensive. But this government managed to spend close to \$2 billion and not achieve its goal, when Alberta had already achieved the goals and the government could have easily gone to Alberta and saved all that money. The government didn't have to move the gas plants and

they could have saved the billions of dollars. The government didn't have to give bonuses to Pan Am executives. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

The reason the doctors came down today, the reason the doctors feel disrespected, is because they see money being spent on things outside health care, and inside health care, yet their fees are slashed. They are treated as government employees when it suits the government and as small business owners the rest of the time. Maybe the doctors made a mistake when they went into this model of medicare in that they didn't insist on the government paying for their rent, and hiring and training their staff. They spend hours every week just doing paperwork, just paying bills, just dealing with landlords, training staff, and then staff come to them and—you know, we've all been through it where staff have health problems, they have family issues, perhaps a staff member is pregnant and it's a technician who has to work a machine. It's not easy to find somebody and to train somebody. Doctors often spend six months training a new staff person just to have that staff person say, "You know what, this job is too stressful. I'm going to work somewhere else." They had to pay from their OHIP billings, their service fees, to train that staff person.

Doctors are told—say they're in some kind of family health team—if their patients go to see another doctor, their fees are cut. Why doesn't this government consider implementing a system where if you don't go to the doctor who is rostered to be your doctor, maybe you have to pay out of pocket? Maybe you have to pay for that second opinion. Maybe the government has to fess up to the population and admit—admit—it doesn't have the money for first-rate health care in the province of Ontario and this is the way they've decided to budget: They've decided to budget that everybody can see just so many doctors per year or they can only see a specialist once per year, and that patients are going to have to somehow get health insurance or somehow cover it out of their pocket.

The government doesn't want to do that, and that's why it's so insulting to hear the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry saying that somehow the opposition day motion is playing games and trying to score political points. The fact that the government has decided to try to balance their health care spending because they've hit a brick wall in terms of their spending capacity, that they're trying to balance it by cutting and slashing doctors' fees, is exactly because they are trying to politically solve the solution without upsetting patients. If they try to limit access to health care, well, that's a lot of voters. That's a big voting group.

Doctors cannot go on strike and doctors wouldn't. We know our doctors wouldn't go on strike even if they had the right to strike. We are well aware of that. We are well aware that the doctors wouldn't do some kind of work-to-rule the way we have seen with other public sector workers. They wouldn't say to their patients, "No, I'm not giving you a renewal for your prescription. I'm not rewriting the prescription that you lost on the way home from your visit to doctor. You know, why don't I send it to the Ministry of Health and have you get it from them?"

Doctors don't like having to say to patients, "You know, that's not covered by OHIP and you're going to have to pay." Many doctors are capable of doing that; they're capable of charging service fees to their patients for things that have already been shown to not be covered by OHIP services. They don't like doing it. They don't like nickel-and-diming their patients but they also want to be fairly compensated for the average of 11 years that they go to post-secondary education, for the years of training, for the nights of on-call, for the calls that they take that they're not paid for—all the phone calls. Many patients have children who don't speak to each other, so you speak to one child and the parent has Alzheimer's and you explain whether they can handle having surgery or not, and then you have to speak to the other child.

1740

This is hours and hours every week that our doctors spend on the phone, spend in person, just trying to counsel, that they're not compensated for. They're not asking for more money, but they're also not asking to see their fees slashed. It's not just about the money—yes, they do have expenses to pay—in terms of the fees; it's a kick in the head. That's what's upsetting them. That's why they took time out of their busy lives.

We saw some doctors came with their children today, which reminds us that they have children who want to go to hockey, like my colleague here. They want to take their kids to hockey. They want to see their kids in the school play. Well, it's not easy to take time off when you have sick patients who have appointments, when you have emergencies, when you're on call. We've heard doctors speak to us about getting ready to go home from the hospital after a long day and then seeing an emergency come in. Realising that there's not enough staff to deal with so many emergencies at the same time, they decide to stay and help out. Those are the doctors who we want in this province, Mr. Speaker. Those are the doctors who the patients of the province deserve.

I think that we're put here as parliamentarians to ensure that the priority is health care, and the best health care. If too much money is going to bureaucracies, then we have to address that. We don't necessarily need to always build more hospitals. Yes, some areas are underserviced in terms of hospitals, but perhaps with existing hospitals, we can have surgeries go on in the evenings or on the weekends. A lot of times, patients are misled by politicians in thinking that a new hospital in their area is going to mean more access to health care. Well, a new hospital needs doctors and nurses and equipment to run, and sometimes we're better off putting more equipment, more doctors and more nurses into an existing hospital rather than just building new hospitals—unless we have put aside the money. Obviously, we'd prefer new hospitals, but we also have to have the money in place to have adequate health care professionals and equipment to run those hospitals.

To wrap up for this side of the House today, I just want to mention very quickly that the Ontario population at 13.6 million, with 320,000 patients treated per day by

our doctors, 5.9 million patient visits to emergency rooms every year, 59 million patient visits to family doctors, 57 million patient visits to specialists and 50 hours of work per week for most of the doctors and 22 hours a week on call—all I want to say from this side of the House is thank you, thank you, thank you. We couldn't have the type of province where people all over the world—they don't just want to come to Canada; they want to come to Ontario. One of the reasons is the fantastic health care system that we have.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I've had the pleasure of being here in the chamber this afternoon to hear a number of folks on all sides of the House address what is a very important issue, this motion brought forward today.

Obviously, we're joined here in the galleries and have been throughout the course of the day by a number of individuals for whom this is more than just a political football that gets tossed around amongst the representatives from the three parties in this House. Many others, representing all three parties here, have spoken directly to those who are in the galleries who practise in the health care world, the physicians who are here and others who brought family members with them as well.

I think you can understand—and those watching at home and those who continue to advocate for a particular outcome in this regard—that we all take this issue very seriously, because, of course, the health care of one's self, the health care of one's family and the health care of one's community are of paramount importance to all of us, and it is one of the most important responsibilities that a provincial government here in this country has.

I don't have a ton of time on the clock, but having listened to members of both the Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party speak this afternoon about this issue, to this motion specifically, expressing their support for the motion, if I could say that, and expressing their version of history—if I had one message to provide to those who are here in the galleries and, again, those who are watching at home and those who are advocating, I guess what I would say to those individuals is: Don't be fooled. Don't be fooled into believing that because at this particular juncture in time members, in particular of the Conservative Party, are spinning a bit of mythology with respect to their, I would say, recent conviction, their recent sense of how important it is to adequately fund the health care system here in the province of Ontario.

I've had the honour of serving as the MPP for Vaughan for about three years, but a number of years ago I had the honour of working here in a support staff role to one of my predecessors—actually, two former MPPs—three, actually—in this House. From 1996 to 1999 I served here and I distinctly remember exactly what kind of crisis and exactly what kind of chaos that party, the Conservative Party, delivered to Ontario's health care system.

I know that the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry and others have mentioned some of the stuff that

occurred during that era: firing more than 6,000 nurses; a former Premier, Mike Harris, talking about nurses—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Hula hoops.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hula hoops. That was the reference he used. That was the level of respect that party brought to the discussion at that point in time, and closing nearly, I believe, 30 hospitals across the province of Ontario.

We say hospitals, but that is nearly 30 communities with thousands and thousands of health care practitioners—physicians, nurses—and families who sensed the level of crisis and chaos that the Conservative Party brought to Ontario's health care system. They experienced it first-hand. That was one of the very crucial reasons why in 2003 the people of Ontario responded so overwhelmingly and so positively to the platform put forward by the Ontario Liberal Party at that point in time.

Over the last number of years, as others on this side of the House have referenced, we have continued to invest in building up the province, generally speaking, but specifically to support health care in this province, so that we now have built, over those number of years, since 2003, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 18 to 20 additional hospitals; thousands of doctors hired, thousands of nurses hired in the ongoing effort to repair the disaster that you left.

You left a health care system in this province that you should be ashamed of, and you are ashamed of it. It's clear, when you listen to this newly minted leader from that party, who served so passively at the side of soon-to-be-former Prime Minister Stephen Harper—as that leader, Patrick Brown, served so passively for a decade beside that Prime Minister, it is no wonder that Patrick Brown is determined to turn himself into a pretzel to make people believe on this side of the House, to make you believe in the galleries and to make those believe watching at home that suddenly he has seen the light and has found religion on the importance of health care in this province of Ontario. I said it a few minutes ago: People should not be fooled.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Stop the clock. The member from Nepean–Carleton is yelling to the gallery and yelling at the minister. I'm having trouble hearing. The poor Speaker is having trouble hearing. So we'll cut it back a bit, won't we?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We won't be talking between you two, either. We'll be cutting it back, won't we?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I did. I promised that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Good, I'm glad you promised that. Thank you for the interjection.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You can be quiet, too.

Go ahead.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. I appreciate that. Of course, it's not a surprise to anybody

who has any sense of the importance of this issue that the member from Nepean–Carleton and all of her colleagues and certainly her new leader on that side of the House would want to do their very best to distract the people of Ontario about the abysmal track record that they have.

I referenced it a second ago: Thousands of nurses fired; a former Premier, from Nipissing, I might add, a former Conservative Premier from Nipissing, from North Bay, who said that nurses in Ontario are like hula hoops, who fired thousands of them, who closed hospitals, who left health care and all other crucial public services in this province in a shambles when he and his party—or at least his party—were booted from office in 2003. In every single provincial election since then, they have done their best to run around in circles, always to the right, of course, but to run around in circles to run away from that track record.

Yet, in last year's provincial election they put forward a platform—not just the former leader of that party, Tim Hudak—that called for 100,000 people working in Ontario's broader public service to be fired. They didn't come to Vaughan to make that announcement. They didn't go to Thunder Bay to make the announcement. They didn't go to Ottawa to make the announcement. They went to Barrie, and Patrick Brown stood beside Tim Hudak and endorsed the plan to fire 100,000—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. The minister's really got them going. The member from Durham is putting on quite a display of yelling and screaming. He might want to get back in his seat.

Continue.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. It's no wonder that we get worked up on this side of the House when you hear all of them interjecting. They should be embarrassed because they are embarrassed, and this particular motion—

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: He's not speaking to this motion at all. I think the standing orders are pretty clear—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Listen, listen. I'm trying to do a point of order here, Speaker. I believe the minister needs to speak about the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that the minister has been very aggressive towards the health care system that he felt wasn't there. I think that relates to what we're talking about here, so I don't think that the point of order is in order.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Speaker. Again I say to member from Leeds–Grenville, he's being a good and loyal soldier on that side of the House, because of course it does him no harm to try and interrupt the train of thought that's coming from this side of the House.

Let me just repeat so it's clear: Your new leader, Patrick Brown, stood beside your old leader, Tim Hudak,

in Barrie and said that 100,000 of you—100,000 people like this in our chamber today, in our gallery—would be let go if you were given power last year. Guess what? Just like in 2003, just like in 2007, just like in 2011 and again in 2014, the people of Ontario said no to your disastrous, chaotic, crisis-laden plan for health care in this province. They rewarded our plan. They rewarded our Premier because they said, “You have the right idea. Invest, build the province up, respond, hiring thousands of nurses, opening dozens of hospitals and moving forward.”

Speaker, I only regret that I don’t have enough time to talk about the NDP’s track record in this regard. I will stay focused on the Conservatives. It is important for everybody listening and for everybody watching that notwithstanding Patrick Brown’s determination to run away as quickly and as aggressively as he can from all of his own political history and all of the Conservative Party’s recent political history, it will not work. For four consecutive election campaigns, the people of Ontario have not been fooled. They will not be fooled. They will continue to want us to invest in health care. They will continue to want us to work with physicians, doctors, and other health care practitioners. They’ll want us to keep on building crucial public services, investing in infrastructure, making sure the province moves forward, building the kind of economy, supporting the kind of quality of life, and making sure, above all else, that the province of Ontario continues to be the best province in the greatest country in the world.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Who says it’s not exciting in here?

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those against, say “nay.”

I believe the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats. Order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we all done, the member from Renfrew?

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day number 3. All in favour will please stand up one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Brown, Patrick	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Vanhof, John
Fife, Catherine	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please stand one at a time and be recognized by the Clerks’ table.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Baker, Yvan	Gravelle, Michael	Monidi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Jaczek, Helena	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Kiwalla, Sophie	Orazioetti, David
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Potts, Arthur
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Qaadi, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 33; the nays are 50.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1806.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergeant d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
LaLonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est-Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
		Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valérie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

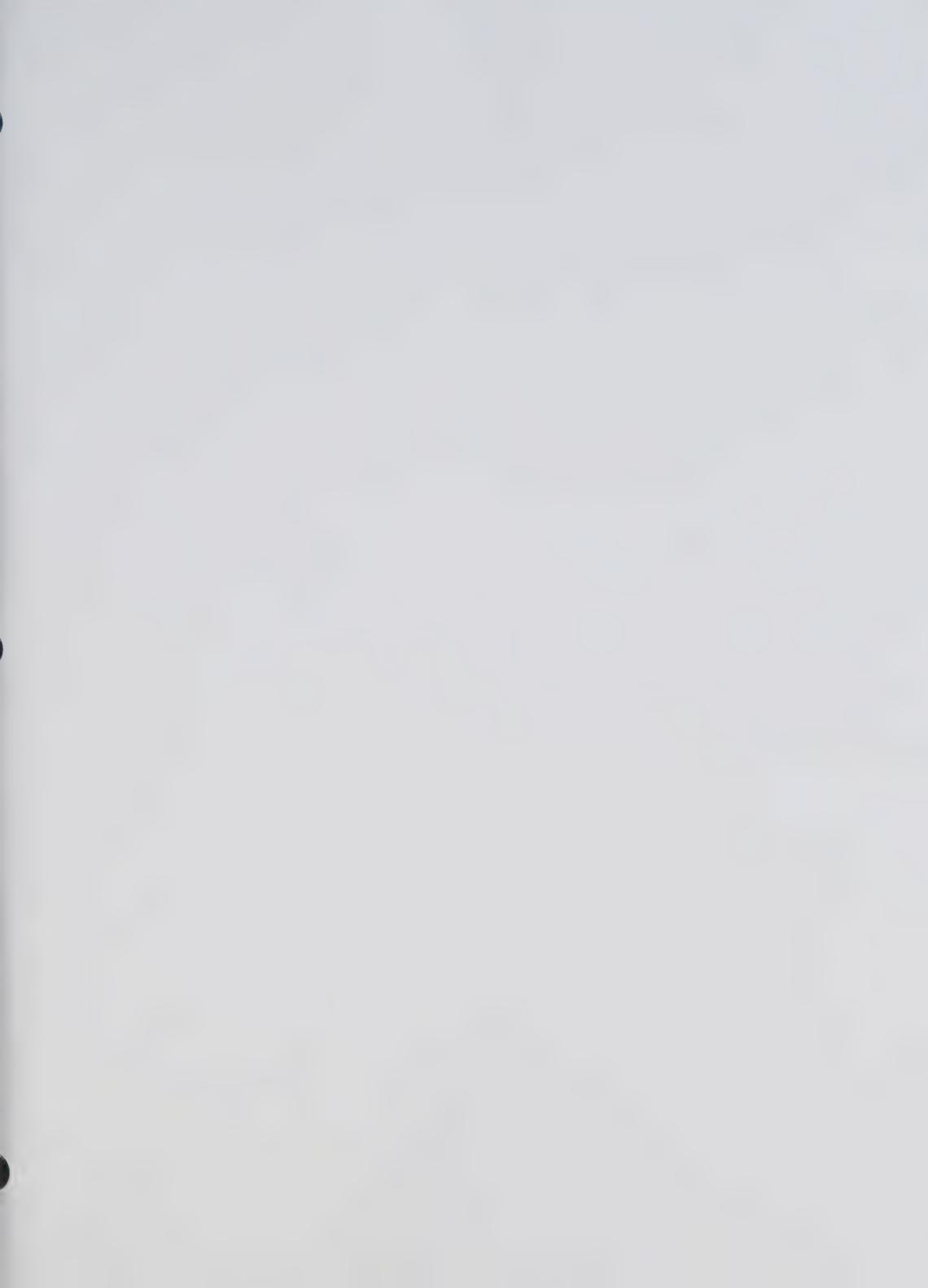
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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

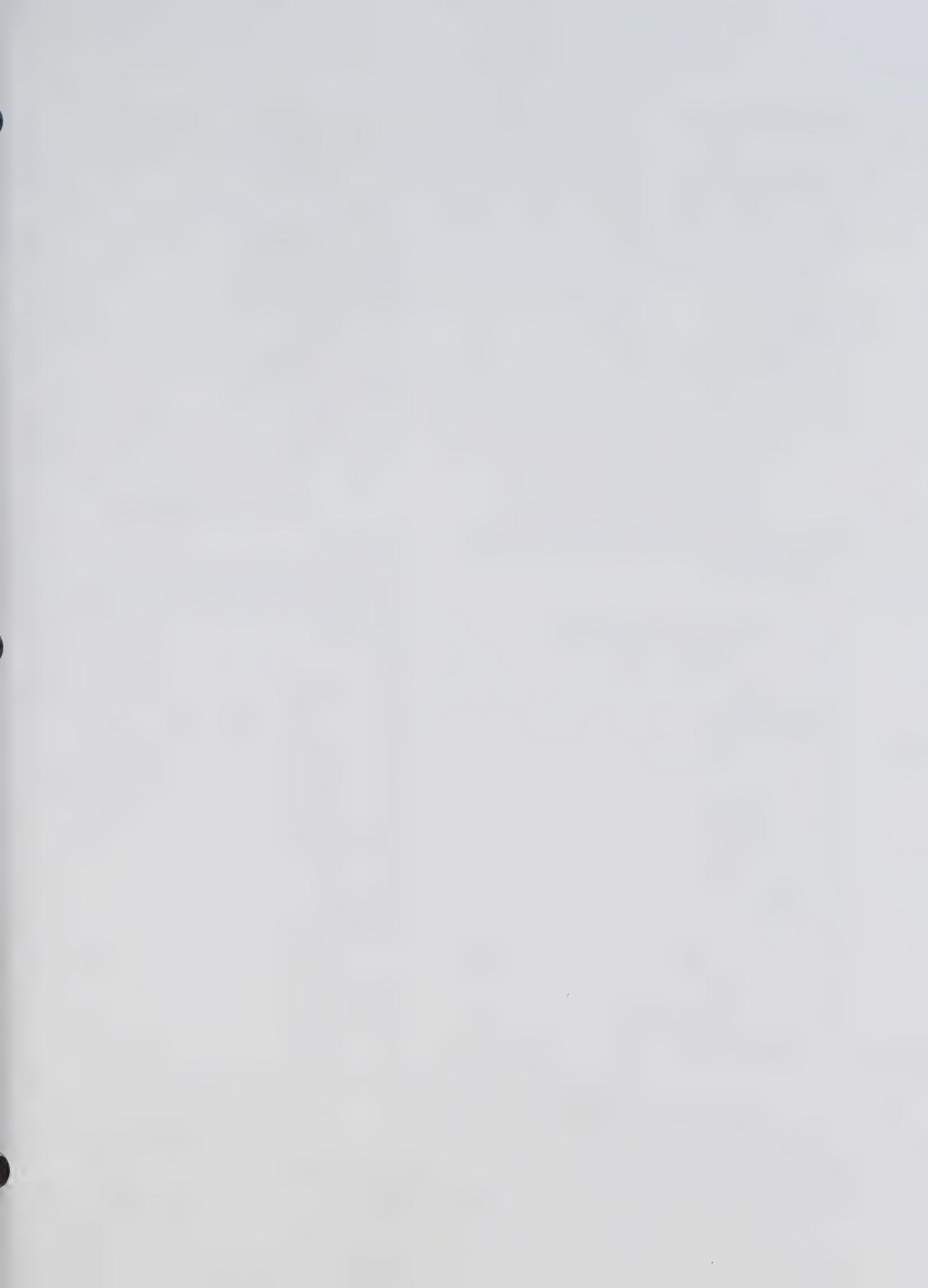
Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valérie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Tara Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch





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Government
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First Session, 41st Parliament

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Première session, 41^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 22 October 2015

Jeudi 22 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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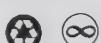
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2015, on the amendment to the motion for time allocation of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I can't say it is a pleasure for me to speak on this government closure motion. I remember very clearly last summer when we sat here and listened to the throne speech, and this government used this term—I'll remember it for the rest of my life. They said they would choose "partnership over partisanship." That's what they said they would do. Time after time after time this government has rammed through pieces of legislation because they don't want the opposition's voices to be heard and they don't want the voices of Ontarians to be heard.

This is the 13th bill—the 13th bill—that this government has time-allocated. Bill 112 has only had three members from my caucus have comments on the record: Mr. Yakabuski, Mr. McNaughton—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know what? If the Minister of Municipal Affairs wants to speak, I'm sure there's lots of time on the government's 40 minutes for him to speak. Let me have my time.

Three members have spoken; 24 members of the opposition have not spoken to this bill. I think the reason they don't want to take an energy bill on the road is because they don't want to hear from Ontarians. They don't want to hear from Ontarians on their November 1 increase of hydro rates for Ontarians. They don't want to hear from Ontarians about their disastrous plan to sell off Hydro One.

But don't take my word for it. Take the word of the member for St. Catharines, the member of the Legislature

who has the most experience. Let's have on the record some of his words about closure motions. I'm going to quote from Minister Bradley from November 24, 1993. This is what Jim Bradley, the member for St. Catharines, said that day: "I'm concerned about the closure motions because I think they limit legitimate debate. I recognize that a government ultimately might have the opportunity to close down a debate that's been going on a very long period of time. But as I've indicated to the House in days gone by, the purpose of these debates is to canvass public opinion, to make the public aware of what is happening."

He goes on to say: "All of us have experienced the situation where we have encountered our constituents and they've said, 'What is this particular bill all about?' or 'How did this bill get passed and I didn't know anything about it?' They are legitimate questions. One of the reasons is that the bills tend to get passed very rapidly in this House."

This is what the government is trying to do. They're trying to ram through this bill. They don't want substantive public hearings across the province; they don't want to hear from the opposition members or Ontarians about their energy policy. That's why they've put this time allocation motion, that's why they're stifling debate, and it has to stop, Speaker. It has to stop today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess what I have to say is very much in line with what the previous speaker had to say when it comes to time allocation motions. When we get elected, we get elected to bring the views of the people we represent. Ontario is a big province—we're talking over 13.5 million people—and many of them have many differing views about the topic. I will be speaking about the people of Nickel Belt. These are the people I am here to represent.

When it comes to Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998, we're really talking about two pieces of legislation that have been put together. The first piece of legislation has to do with the regulation of energy consumers. Basically, what we are trying to regulate with the first part of the bill is the door-to-door marketing of energy contracts.

I can tell you that this practice is very alive and well in Nickel Belt. Every couple of months they will target a different area of my riding, and then the phone calls start coming in. The problem is the delay between the time when they sign the contract and the time when they realize that they have been taken. What they were sold at

the door was not at all what ended up being on their energy bill. By the time they make their way to my office, it is often really, really hard to help them. Don't get me wrong: We have done enough of them that we know where to call and we know what to do, and we get some of them out of those contracts. But for some of them it is too late.

0910

The patterns are always the same. The way this business is conducted is that they will go and target a neighbourhood. They will knock at the door, and somebody who doesn't know what is happening opens the door. They engage in a conversation, they ask to see their energy bill and then they basically make it sound like what they are selling them is so good—that it is bulletproof, that it will save them money—that all they have to do is sign on the dotted line and then they will be fine.

I can tell you that I have dozens of families on Mattagami First Nation that have been targeted by this, that have signed those contracts and that are now paying energy bills that are out of this world. Fortunately, a few of them came to see me right away, and we were able to get them out of those contracts, but for some of them—I don't want to paint them all with the same brush, but they tend to be the elders. They tend to be people who are more trustworthy. They've lived their whole lives with, when they say something, this is what they mean, and you can hold them to their word. So when somebody comes to their door and tells them something, they assume that the person on the other side of the door is just as trustworthy as they are, but they are not. Now they are stuck with those bills that make no sense. There's very little we can do to get them out of those contracts.

Mattagami was an area that was targeted in my riding. They also targeted the valley. They targeted neighbourhoods within Chelmsford. They targeted neighbourhoods within Azilda. You can see, by the type of neighbourhoods where they put in most of their efforts, that they target people who are trustworthy. They target people who tend to stand by the words that they speak and expect everybody else to do the same, but it is not the same.

So the first part of Bill 112 is certainly something that we have no problem—I shouldn't say this. We could make that part even stronger, but the direction of that part of the bill is a direction that we support. I wish I had time to do a full debate on that because then I could really show you, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, what some of the practices are and, also, what needs to change in the bill in order to make this stronger. Unfortunately, I'm not given the opportunity to do that.

I never had a chance to speak to Bill 112. Now I have to speak to a closure motion that will mean that I will never have a chance to put on the record the good ideas that the people of Nickel Belt want to see changed in that bill. This is an opportunity lost. I don't understand why we don't want to hear from those people. I'm sure, like all 107 of us, we've all had constituents come to our constituency office with a contract from an energy marketer that they signed at the door that they wish they

could get out of. To me, it is important to get those stories out, because good ideas come from this. Some of what is in the bill is certainly good, but could we make it stronger? Yes, we could.

Speaker, a bill is not an incremental affair. It's not like this year we will go that far, and next year we'll make another step to make the bill better, and the year after we will—no. Bills get worked on, and then it is decades before they get worked on again. So why not take our time and make sure that we have an opportunity to hear from everybody who has something to say about this so that we move forward in a way so that we can be proud of the work that we have done? We can look at this piece of legislation and say together that we made this as good as it could be so that the aim of the bill, to protect consumers, is achieved in all parts of the province, because things are different. If you live on a remote First Nation, if you live in northern Ontario in a rural community that I represent or if you live in downtown Peterborough or Niagara or Essex, things are different. That's why we all come together. But when the government brings forward a closure motion—it's called a time allocation motion—basically what they are saying is that they don't want to hear from those good people, that the experience they have gone through—they're not interested in listening to the people of Ontario, which is absolutely bizarre in a democracy.

In a democracy, our parliamentary system is made so that we take the time to listen to the people of our province. But in this particular bill, we're not going to do this. I'm hoping that, through committee, we take the time to listen. There are some good ideas out there that will make this bill better. I hope we will take the time to listen to them and make changes.

The second part of the bill, the part that has to do with the Ontario Energy Board Act—this is awful; this is wrong. Why they have put two acts that really have nothing to do with one another into one single bill, I don't understand, Speaker, but this has to change. Although I would say that most of us agree that we need to strengthen consumer protection when it comes to energy contracts and door-to-door marketing and all of that—we agree with that direction—I could not tell you how opposed we are to the second part of the bill.

Basically, the second part of the bill takes away accountability. It takes away transparency. It takes away consumer protection when it comes to the Ontario Energy Board. It opens the door for offshoring. It takes away restrictions for our environment. It takes away restrictions for transmitters and distributors of energy. This part of the bill either has to be taken out of Bill 112 or needs to be completely redone in this day and age where we have a government that is bound and determined to sell Hydro. No matter if we need the money or not, no matter if we are being taken to the cleaners because the deal makes no sense, they are bound and determined to do this.

After removing all the accountability that comes with the officers of this House, that is, the Auditor General, the

Ombudsman—basically, all seven officers of this House won't have an opportunity to look at Ontario Hydro anymore—now they are even taking away the powers of the Ontario Energy Board to protect us, the consumers; to protect us, the people of Ontario. This is all that the second part of this bill does: It takes away protections from us.

Why would you time-allocate something like that; something that is in such high need of better understanding? If the government has a valid reason for the second part of the bill, they have yet to share that with us, Speaker. I can see no good coming from taking away the power of the Ontario Energy Board, when it comes to distribution and transmission of power, and they haven't explained why they are doing this. They haven't justified how this is going to be useful to the province.

On the other hand, the Conservatives and ourselves have put on the table, I would say, some pretty valid arguments as to how the work of the Ontario Energy Board protects us, but they never answered back. They never told us how our read of the bill was wrong. If our read of the bill is right, that the Ontario Energy Board will be stripped of its power to protect the consumer in the distribution and transmission of power, then why link those two together? It's still a mystery to me, and it is something that is wrong. So we are against a time allocation motion when there are still so many MPPs who haven't had a chance to speak on something that affects every single riding in our province. It is just wrong.

0920

Quand le gouvernement décide d'imposer le bâillon sur un projet de loi—un projet de loi qui affecte tous les résidents et résidentes de l'Ontario, peu importe dans laquelle des 107 circonscriptions vous demeurez—ça nous empêche de s'assurer qu'on a les bonnes résolutions pour améliorer le projet de loi afin que le projet de loi nous protège, peu importe où nous vivons en Ontario. Que nous vivions dans une communauté autochtone isolée ou en plein cœur de Toronto, les réalités sont différentes, mais le projet de loi va s'appliquer partout. Il faut trouver une balance un peu plus équitable.

En plus, le projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario—une partie s'en va dans la bonne direction. Elle pourrait certainement être renforcée, mais elle est très bonne. Mais l'autre partie sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario n'a aucun sens et, franchement, nous met tous à risque, nous les consommateurs.

Je dois laisser un peu de temps, mais je vous assure, monsieur le Président, que nous sommes contre l'imposition du bâillon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

On Oct. 21, Mr. Leal moved government notice of motion number 41. Mr. Smith then moved that the motion be amended as follows:

That the paragraph starting “That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill” be struck out and replaced with:

“That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015”; and that the third bullet be struck out and replaced with:

“—That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the subcommittee with a list of requests to appear; and

“—That the members of the subcommittee prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 29, 2015; and

“—That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists.”

We are now dealing with Mr. Smith's amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Further debate?

Mr. Leal has moved government notice of motion number 41. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The vote will be taken after question period.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day? The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Before I deliver this, I just wanted to say good morning. We have 25 French-language exchange students from Paris in Peterborough right now. They're leaving to go home on Saturday. I just want to give them a big good morning.

My good friend the member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell wanted to say good morning to the folks in his riding.

Having said that, I move government order G85, which is an outstanding bill.

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 20, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's always a pleasure and an honour to be able to stand in this House to speak to bills brought forward by the government and in respect to the riding that I come from, Hamilton Mountain.

This bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, is a far cry from what we really thought we would see when we see a title such as that. The gov-

ernment is lacking the ability to provide the leadership in respect to presenting Bill 85 as substantive legislation when it's evidently obliged through needed regulatory changes.

To call this a "strengthening and improving" act is misleading, as the public may rightfully assume that real changes would be made to legislation, instead of minor amendments that we can say are more common sense.

This bill evidently neither strengthens nor really improves government. As has already been mentioned in debates before, it is really only housekeeping on a range of issues which, alternatively, could have been accomplished even more effectively through regulation. There are many, many, many other important issues that this government should be tackling and working hard to legislate that would benefit Ontarians. Instead, they choose to focus their attention on amending acts that, in the long run, would not have any substantial impact and will not truly impact or strengthen government.

In respect to changes to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, this bill would amend the act in order to provide immunity from lawsuits for Ontario Medical Association, or OMA, representatives for negotiated agreements or when making recommendations to the government. This amendment implements an already approved provision of the 2012 physician services agreement between the government and OMA. This is an amendment that has been long promised to our OMA staff. However, I find it ironic that the government is suggesting amendments to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act to protect OMA staff from lawsuits when this very same government themselves recently made cuts to the OMA.

This bill is supposed to strengthen and improve legislation, but how can this be justified when they themselves want to interfere with our health care system? I have personally heard from OMA staff in my riding of Hamilton Mountain who have been affected by these cuts. The doctors may appreciate being provided immunity from lawsuits, but they do not appreciate the mismanagement of resources and reduction in medical care funding.

In the preamble of the medicare act, it states that the act affirms that "a strong health system depends on collaboration between the community, individuals, health service providers and governments, and a common vision of shared responsibility." The common vision of shared responsibility has been skewed. The government has set the bar low in protecting our doctors so that they can say they have overachieved in providing immunity for lawsuits for them in this particular amendment.

This amendment cannot pacify the government's cuts to the OMA. A doctor emailed my constituency office in Hamilton and said, "the conditions the current government has created for physicians, mean that despite our hard work, few of us feel appreciated, instead we feel like we are seen as a problem to be managed." Another stated, "As a doctor, I don't feel respected by this government. I don't feel that the government is empowering

me to provide quality, patient-focused care. Ontarians rightly expect doctors and government to work together, that means returning to meaningful and respectful bargaining."

With a loss of respect now from the government in collaboration with the doctors, I think the government needs to reconsider what will ultimately strengthen and improve the health care system.

With respect to the Employment Standards Act, to reiterate, it would be amended to make it clear that demands for money made to third parties like banks are valid for 365 days from the day they are served. This is simply to align with tribunal rulings on already-established precedence on the collection of monies owed. The amendment that the government is suggesting does benefit the employees; however, this amendment neither significantly strengthens nor improves the government. To ensure that this amendment is effective, the Ministry of Labour requires additional staff to ensure enforcement.

0930

As mentioned before by one of my colleagues, there also needs to be a more aggressive, more transparent and more effective complaints mechanism for all employees in this province. Presently, the ministry lacks an effective system to investigate complaints and labour violations.

I recently spoke with a constituent whose husband was hired through a temp agency to work 12-hour continental shifts for almost five years now—almost half a decade, and he is technically still a temp worker. He has never seen a raise, he has no benefits, he has no pension, he has not earned any vacation time, and there is still no obligation for his employer to hire him. There is no job security for this young man, who has a family. He has some minor health issues that are affecting his performance of his job. However, he feels—or, better yet, he fears—that if his employer finds out, he will be terminated, because his employer sees him as just a temp worker. How can we expect someone who has no job security and will not complain about their health issues to their employer to have the courage to complain to the ministry if there is any violation in terms of their labour rights?

Almost 75% of temp agencies audited by the Ministry of Labour this year broke the law. There needs to be a mechanism that allows for individuals like my constituent to justly complain and notify the ministry of issues.

He is not alone in my riding or in this province. Most temporary agency workers are not given equal break times as their permanent co-workers, despite completing the same job in the same hours. Also, people who are temporary workers are often paid less and not paid on time. There are a number of issues in the area of temporary agencies, and those workers do not see a way to complain about any of the injustices without being penalized.

If we really want to improve the Ministry of Labour, as this bill semantically proposes in its title, "to strengthen and improve government," one way that my colleague the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton strongly rec-

ommended was to strengthen and improve complaints mechanisms and then, most importantly, to have a vigorous system so that we make sure people are all able to enforce the rights and protections that all workers in our province have.

Again, this amendment would end up benefiting workers, but if the ministry does not do their due diligence to execute enforcement, it will prove to be insignificant. We know what it's like when it comes to enforcement from this government, Speaker, in many ministries.

While this bill looks to amend a number of ministries, the government has again missed the mark. If the government truly believed in the name of the bill, "to strengthen and improve government," they would have taken into consideration the Ministry of Energy. Sure, this bill does amend a series of acts and impacts various ministries, but what about real, meaningful changes? Instead, the government has weakened accountability and transparency with respect to the Ministry of Energy.

The government passed legislation that removed the Ombudsman from providing accountability and oversight to the energy file. Again, it is ironic that the government considers concerns put forward by the Ombudsman when it comes to amending the Highway Traffic Act to regulate private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation vehicles and their drivers, but removes oversight from the energy file. Trying to amend and strengthen one ministry while weakening another is truly counterproductive in their efforts to improve government.

The Ministry of Energy, particularly Hydro One, is one of the most complained-about areas in our government. I still get phone calls and emails from constituents upset about the government's decision.

Speaker, I'm running out of time quickly here. Jeez, 10 minutes goes fast. Wowzers.

Under the public system and under oversight, the public was able to complain about billing issues to the Ombudsman, and they had their office investigate that problem and reported it back to the government. Now with the way the government has reduced those oversight mechanisms, it's definitely not improving or strengthening our government. Again, this government puts out a great title and nothing in the bill to follow it—things that could have been done by regulation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very happy to respond to the member opposite. But I do have to take issue with her characterization of the bill as only housekeeping and not really having any impact. One of the things that the bill does is amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to what are officially called non-emergency stretcher transportation service vehicles. These are the things that you might notice parked outside your local hospital that look almost like ambulances, but they're not really. What they really are are transfer vehicles that are run by a private company and that take people from long-term care to hospital; from hospital A to hospital B, if it's non-emergency; or from hospital to home. But what's

consistent about the people who are being transferred is that they can't really sit up in a regular taxi or a passenger car. They actually need to be on a stretcher while they're being transferred.

This is an area where, once upon a time when I was parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and looking at issues around rural and northern health care, I heard a lot about the inconsistency in the standards and performance of this particular sector. It's also something that attracted the attention of the Ombudsman, who made a number of recommendations a year or so ago about the inconsistencies in this particular sector. So what the bill would actually do is require that, in order to operate one of those companies, you would have to hold a commercial vehicle operator's registration, and vehicles, drivers and attendants would have to make specific requirements for the vehicle; contain particular equipment in case an emergency does arise; and the attendants would be required to meet minimum standards so that they have the capacity to respond. We would be addressing all of those core issues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions or comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to thank our NDP colleague for raising some valid concerns about Bill 85 because, while it's cleaning up a few items here and there, it really—I do agree with you—does nothing to improve government. I totally agree with that. It's a nice title, but it's only a name.

Bill 85 was actually introduced seven months ago, and it covers nothing significant and it makes no serious changes to our province. In the same amount of time, however, the Liberals—I think it's rather ironic, Speaker. They introduced this seven months ago and it covers nothing, as I said. It is going to really make no difference in the lives of Ontarians across the province, but on the flip side, the Liberals are saying they could get a comprehensive cap-and-trade system pulled together, introduced and implemented in the same amount of time. That makes me nervous, a little bit, in that we have a simple housekeeping bill that took seven months to come together and debate and, meanwhile, an incredibly far-reaching, comprehensive initiative that's going to touch every Ontarian gets rammed through in seven months? It doesn't make any sense.

At the end of the day, we need to be coming forward to this Legislature and introducing legislation that is going to make a difference for Ontarians. We need to be focusing on the initiatives that get down to the business of making the province profitable again, attracting investment and jobs back to Ontario, and putting more money into the pockets of the province's taxpayers, as opposed to wasting our time here on Bill 85, which is simple housecleaning. It really doesn't touch on issues that I will be glad to speak about in a few minutes' time.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Hamilton Mountain about Bill 85.

The only good thing I can say about Bill 85 is it has a pretty good title: An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts. For anyone who has listened to what the member for Hamilton Mountain had to say, you will have realized that Bill 85 is really putting together six or seven different bits and pieces of bills to bring things forward. Some of those bits and pieces sort of make sense. Some of those are quite puzzling, as in, why do we need to change something that has to do with people reaching age 65 when, 10 years ago, we settled this? People want to continue working past age 65, they have been doing that since the last 10 years. But Ontario has clued in that the law changed 10 years ago and now wants to change it also.

Some of it is bizarre; some of it could have been done long ago; some of it could be done through other means; and some of it has value. But in a typical Liberal fashion, they put all this in the same pot, in the same bill, and they bring this forward. It's hard to understand.

We have a labour bill on the docket right now. Why not take schedule 4 of the Ministry of Labour and simply add it to that bill? We have a number of bills that have to do with health care right now. Why not take schedule 3 and simply add it to a health bill? We have a number of bills that—I see my time is over. It's still a weird bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a pleasure to stand in this House today to talk about the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

We all come to this House with a vast array of our past experiences and we continually draw from these experiences in order to debate, write and create government bills. We're making changes, as has already been mentioned, to several acts, including the Courts of Justice Act, the Family Law Act, the Provincial Offences Act and several others.

Each side of this House debates from its own political perspective. I don't think that it's "puzzling" or "bizarre," as has been mentioned; it's an effort to improve efficiency and improve government.

We are looking at modernizing processes and making systems easier to manage and navigate. A number of small but important measures have been designed to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government. They are proposed amendments to existing statutes and not new pieces of stand-alone legislation.

There is no effort made to hide anything within this bill. It is, as has already been said, a housekeeping bill that cleans up a few issues.

We will always debate from our own perspective, we will always try to bring into the point of view of this House something from our riding. I think that that's a natural thing for us to do. But there's nothing in this bill that is controversial. It's a cleanup bill, and I'm very happy to lend my support to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Hamilton Mountain. You have two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thanks to the Minister of Education, to the member from Huron-Bruce, to my wonderful colleague from Nickel Belt, and Kingston and the Islands.

As we can see here, this bill, all of these different pieces, are also confused by the government. The minister says it's not housekeeping, that it's very important; the member from Kingston and the Islands says it's housekeeping. Which one is it? Is it not housekeeping? Is it housekeeping? Can we not get down to the real business in this House that Ontarians want to hear? We want to talk about hydro. We want to talk about housing. We want to talk about important issues that are being faced in this government—accountability, oversight and the lack thereof—instead of a title that's called Strengthening and Improving Government Act. We need to talk about what really needs to be strengthened and what really needs to be improved. The things that are in this bill, other than what I've seen with the stretcher transportation—other than that, everything could have been done through regulation. It could have been the sweep of a pen and it was done. Instead, we're spending surmountable amounts of time here in this House speaking about things that really don't need to be here before us.

I would like to see oversight in a lot of areas. Children's aid societies: We're still seeing major gaps. Our hydro system: With the swipe of this government the Ombudsman has been taken out of that equation. Health care: We have a patient ombudsman, but we'll see how well that works—not as at arm's-length as the provincial Ombudsman himself is.

There's a lot of work to be done here. Hopefully, we can get this pushed forward and hopefully get on to some real business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 85 because it's important that we use this bill as an example of how the government is wasting time and skirting issues that really need to be addressed.

Mr. Michael Harris: And money.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And money. Thank you. Yes, very good point.

While it's sad to say we've seen a lot of government mismanagement here at Queen's Park over the past decade, despite that fact, at the heart of the matter, Bill 85 is really just a caretaker bill. As has been mentioned earlier, it's a housekeeping bill, and, unfortunately, it does absolutely nothing to improve government.

When we take a look at it, this bill is affecting 15 acts. For the record, I just want to read them in: the Courts of Justice Act, Family Law Act, Provincial Offences Act, Vital Statistics Act, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Employment Standards Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, City of Brantford Act, City of Hamilton Act, City of Toronto Act, Municipal Act, Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, and the Highway Traffic Act.

In particular, I'm going to focus in on how we really should be improving government. In the first swipe I want to focus in on the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Again, this is just a housekeeping bill but, clearly, day in and day out, proof comes into this House that substantiates government mismanagement. Work with me on this, Speaker, because it does tie in really nicely in the sense that just this past week, we had proof that direct impacts can happen from industrial wind turbines. That took me down a path to examine what health and safety standards, regulations and oversight we have associated with industrial wind turbines.

Even in estimates committee yesterday, in speaking to the Minister of Energy, when I asked who oversees nuclear energy—it's an impartial third party at the federal level. When I asked about who oversees hydro-electricity and natural gas, the answer was coming back as IESO. Who oversees wind, which is, according to this government, a very important component of Ontario's energy mix? It's tied tightly to the apron strings of the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. We are identifying a huge gap.

With regard to occupational health and safety, in doing some of my research I came to realize that the United Kingdom has a benchmark, if you will, in terms of safety associated with turbines that I think we should seriously be considering right here in this House. I offer to work with the government right here and now to make sure that we have those standards in place.

Mr. Michael Harris: Olive branch.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Yes. I extend the olive branch.

For the record, I want to recognize that in the United Kingdom, there are certain items of equipment that are subject to time-based inspection schedules. These include lifting equipment and lifts, pressure systems, equipment for work at height such as fall arrest systems and other points, and fire detection and suppression systems. About four or five weeks ago, I met with a company that actually said they're concerned, in terms of occupational health and safety, at the lack of protection when it comes to safety—I could go on and on, but I need to make sure I get all of this in—also, emergency equipment, rescue and evacuation, fire detection and suppression, emergency lighting and first aid equipment. At the root of it all, when it comes to occupational health and safety associated with industrial wind turbines, asset integrity needs to be assured, especially in areas of the structure where failure could result, like we've identified this past week from reports from my riding of Huron-Bruce.

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When we talk about improving government and we go back to revisit the name of this act, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, we could be doing so much more in securing and assuring the safety of Ontarians throughout this province.

I'd also like to focus in on another act that Bill 85 touches on, and that is the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. Again, I beg your indulgence because I

will come full circle on this as well. Health care is something that has affected all of Ontario, as we've seen this past week in the House with regard to the frustration Ontario doctors have had, but also in terms of front-line services in Huron-Bruce. I find it frustrating that this government blusters about wanting to make improvements to a health care act, among others, when they can't even live up to the preamble of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act.

I want to take a moment to remind the House what is said in the preamble of the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act. It says, "The people of Ontario and their government: ... Recognize that access to community-based health care, including primary health care, home care based on assessed need and community mental health care are cornerstones of an effective health care system." Well, Speaker, those cornerstones have eroded over the last decade.

Just yesterday, in meeting with representatives of PAO, the Police Association of Ontario, the root cause of many of the issues they deal with is mental health, and they are in the front of the line saying that this Ontario government today is failing people suffering from mental health. If we're going to address responsibility, we have to make sure that responsibility lies in upholding promises made to the people of Ontario.

When I speak of promises made and health care, I have to remind you, Speaker, that in August 2011 the people of Kincardine and area were promised by a former representative of the Liberal government that they were going to get a new hospital. Unfortunately, after the election of October 6, 2011, that particular minister and representative did not return to the Legislative Assembly. Guess what? The next budget absolutely stripped away the money for the Kincardine hospital. It is not fair.

My colleague from Perth-Wellington had a very important private member's initiative whereby all ridings should be treated equally, especially when the need has been identified and the promises have been made. But, unfortunately, time and again, we have exact proof that this government is playing favourites. They're playing with taxpayer dollars. Is that strengthening and improving government? Absolutely not.

Again, thinking about health care, denying Ontarians access to quality, affordable health care is not good governance. It's negligent. I've got to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that, again, I see it in my own riding. We know, across this province, the wasted money that gets poured into various scandals. In the spirit of health care, we can't ever forget about the wasted millions of dollars that the eHealth scandal evolved into, if you will. Is the eHealth scandal indicative of a strong, responsible government? I think not.

Now, it's interesting that they're planning to cut 50 medical residency spaces over the next two years, along with the cuts that they've been making to physician services. Rural Ontario is in search of more doctors. It just doesn't add up. They're cutting residency spaces, as well as money for services already conducted, as well as

access to front-line health care. Is that responsible, good government? Again, I say no, especially in light of the fact that our population is aging. If we don't start properly allocating funding that we have in terms of our scarce taxpayers' dollars, we're going to have a really rough ride of it.

These seniors paved our way. We stand here proudly in this House because of everything that seniors have done to get us to where we are today. They should be enjoying their retirement and they should be spending time with their families, but instead, on fixed incomes, they're worried about making ends meet. With escalating electricity costs, the cost of food going up—again, they are on fixed incomes. They're stressed, and it's just not right.

I've looked at Bill 85 and I've seen the amendments that they want to make, and it just doesn't mean a hill of beans in the big picture of things. I stress the fact that this caretaking bill has taken seven months to come to fruition. It makes me nervous because this was just a caretaking bill, but when it comes to cap-and-trade, they're ramming it down our throats in seven short months. We know the mess that this government made out of the Green Energy Act, and I can't help but worry about what lies ahead of us in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm certainly pleased to rise on the bill. I found it very interesting that the Liberals weren't sure whether it was a housekeeping bill—because one of our colleagues was saying it's housekeeping and somebody else was saying it wasn't housekeeping. I was really surprised that the education minister wasn't sure whether it was housekeeping or not housekeeping. Maybe that will explain why we're having so much trouble in the education sector on getting collective agreements.

Today, I find it very interesting that we'll stand here and talk for an hour on a housekeeping bill, yet this morning, on time allocation of Bill 112, consumer protection and electricity system—we want to time-allocate that, on something as important as hydro. It makes absolutely no sense.

You take a look at Bill 85 and it talks a little bit about medicare. I want to say this very clearly: I only wish this government cared about health care. I'm going to tell about an area in St. Catharines and one of my colleagues, where they have CarePartners, who are out on strike, trying to get a first collective agreement.

A lady named Linda Knight has forced that situation. Here's what she's doing: She's forcing nurses who are working piecework and \$15 an hour on the picket line, yet—Mr. Speaker, think about this—she is flying nurses in from Sudbury. She's putting them up in hotels. She's paying their meals, paying their mileage, yet those poor workers in St. Catharines and our patients, our seniors who our colleague talked about, who we're supposed to care about, aren't getting the service they deserve.

I'm saying if you really care about health care, will the health minister please intervene in that strike and put

those workers back to work so we can get proper health care for our seniors?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I'd just like the opportunity to clarify a couple of things. I think the minister said that this is not just a housekeeping bill. Take, for example, the changes made to the Ontario child support guidelines. These are extremely important changes and they will require every person whose income is used as part of a child support calculation to provide the other parent updated financial information on an annual basis.

I'm sure that every single member in this House has had single mothers in their offices in a situation where they're dealing with child support issues. I don't think that it is at all wrong to clean up or housekeep this part of the bill to make sure that children get what they deserve. It's extremely important. So I would rather not use my time to debate a single word, whether it's housekeeping or not housekeeping. "Housekeeping" implies that you are cleaning some things up. This is a bill that will modernize and improve legislation, many pieces of legislation. That's something that we should be doing as a government. That's what we're here for.

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I think that there is no point in wasting time debating a word. I think that we need to focus on some of the details of this bill. There are some very positive improvements in the bill, and I would encourage all members to have a look at it, rather than waste time in this House debating on one word as an adjective—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Huron-Bruce on her remarks. I share a number of her concerns as well about Bill 85. I know there's a number of issues, and she touched on many of them, that arise from this bill. It does touch on a number of different acts—I have the bill; here it is—with a number of different schedules that are affected, whether it's health or the Ministry of the Attorney General. I know that in my office, we deal with a number of these different issues on an ongoing basis.

Family law: That's one that could certainly use some help. I don't know whether this bill here will go very far towards dealing with it, but I know my office continually deals with family responsibility issues. It certainly could use some help, so if it will go anywhere towards doing that, I would certainly applaud that. I am sure it can't go far enough to take into account all of the issues that are there.

The Ontario College of Trades: We've had our issues with the Ontario College of Trades. I know there's a number of people in my riding who have concerns with that. And even some people who supported it earlier on are now having second thoughts, because it's starting to impact on job sites and on employers as they try to conduct their work. It's an issue that we highlighted for a year or more.

The Green Energy Act: We don't need to say much about the Green Energy Act. Everybody knows those issues with the Green Energy Act as far as the imposition of wind turbines in small-town Ontario and rural Ontario, where they don't want them. They made it clear that they're unwilling hosts, but this government doesn't listen.

I'm always concerned, when there are new bills brought in, if there's not the proper oversight. So I would want to commend again and go back to the member from Huron-Bruce and the great work she did in her advocacy, in her portfolio, in her critic's role, and also in the work that she has done on criticizing this bill and pointing out where there are shortcomings.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's an honour for me to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to offer some thoughts on the comments from the member from Huron-Bruce about Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

As usual, as we have often seen in this place, the government has a very creative title-writer over on that side of the House, because there are many things that Ontarians would like to see to strengthen and improve government, and most of the amendments that have been included in this legislation actually do very little to strengthen and improve government.

It's kind of ironic that, in fact, we opened up the session this morning with a discussion about Bill 112, the consumer protection and electricity system oversight legislation. Really, it is oversight—it is better oversight, better transparency—that Ontarians are hankering for. We have seen that they have had no opportunity to participate in the discussion around the broadening ownership of Hydro One, the sell-off of one of Ontario's most precious assets.

This legislation really is a caretaking bill, a house-keeping bill. It just tinkers around the edges of the real needs that we have to ensure better oversight and greater transparency, which is what we actually need if we are to truly strengthen and improve government so that we can be responsive to the needs of the people that we represent in our ridings across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Huron-Bruce. You have two minutes.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Two minutes isn't enough to actually express my appreciation to two of my colleagues in this assembly with regard to the comments they made.

To the member from St. Catharines: I agree, Linda Knight is a wonderful lady. She hails from the little village that I grew up near: Belgrave, Ontario. She cares, and she does want to do the right thing. I agree, she needs to have assistance from the Ministry of Health in order to get the issues resolved at that level so that our seniors and our folks requiring that front-line care do have the resources at hand. It is a worry.

To the member from Kingston and the Islands and the member from Sarnia, as well as London West: You shared comments that all bring me back to the fact that we need transparency. We need to be responsive to the needs of our people. I appreciated that phrase specifically from the member from London West. The member from Kingston and the Islands also reminded us that we're here to make a difference.

That brings me to the member from Sarnia. I am, to the end of my days, going to advocate for doing right by our communities that are unwilling hosts of industrial wind turbines—the end result of a misguided, mismanaged Green Energy Act because, as we've identified this past week, there continue to be huge holes eroding and being unveiled in terms of how this has been rammed down Ontarians' throats. Green energy has contributed to the increased cost of electricity, and now we're concerned that direct impacts are happening as industrial wind farms age and continue to be put up in haste. We can do better by Ontarians. We must do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^e France Gélinas: I'm glad to have a few minutes to talk about Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

I want to zero in on a part of the act that I have been pushing for, for a long time. This part is medical transportation services. We have, under this Liberal government, a push to privatize health care systems like we have never seen before. Cancer Care Ontario happened to be at public accounts two weeks ago, and we can now see that private clinics do over 50% of the work, and cancer screening is now done in private clinics.

We have seen all sorts of problems directly linked to the privatization of the health care system. So it is no surprise to you, Speaker, or anybody who follows health care, to see that the use of transportation services other than regular publicly funded ambulance services is rampant within our health care system. I would tell you that private ambulance transport—way, way more business than what is being done by real ambulances.

If I cannot stop them in privatizing everything that is not acute hospital beds, at least we will push them to regulate that industry. Why? Because everybody who has looked at this has said, "This is a disaster." It's not a disaster waiting to happen; it is a disaster that has already happened. It is a disaster where the vehicles being used are completely inappropriate, poorly maintained and poorly driven, but more troubling is that the care that is being provided to those people strapped on those stretchers in the back of those pretend ambulances—some of them have died and a lot of them have had poor care.

What do we have under this bill? We have a government who will pretend that they have regulated the patient transport industry, but all they've done is changed the transport act to say that the Ministry of Transportation will now have to inspect the vehicles. Really? After eight years of telling you that there's this woman who died, babies have been put in danger and a lot of

poor care is being provided in the back of those pretend ambulances, what do the Liberals do? They tell us, "We will make sure that your tires are not flat and that they're wrenched on good." What the heck is this? How could that be?

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Many Ministers of Health—I can remember when Smitherman was still there; I can remember when David was still there; I can remember when—she's still a member of this House—the member from London was there. They and the present minister all said that this industry needs to be regulated.

This industry is being used more and more in Ontario. It has issues with quality of care and needs to be regulated, and the regulations that we are given are that we're going to inspect the vehicle, make sure that it passed the Ministry of Transportation inspection. So I guess it's not going to be emitting too much CO₂. We'll make sure the tires are good. I'm sort of hoping that in northern Ontario, they'll actually ask for winter tires in the winter, but we don't even know that. All we will know is that the vehicle is safe to drive: a little step in the right direction.

If you read the report from the Ombudsman, he said those are vehicles that look like, smell like and are designed to look like ambulances, but they are not. He was not only talking about the shape of the vehicle—if it is so rusted there is a chance the stretcher is going to go straight through the back, or the vehicle is so unsafe that the back door opens up and there's a chance the stretcher goes out the back while you're on the highway and you are strapped in there unable to move. That was only part of it.

The bigger part of it is who is providing the care in the back of those ambulances, because if you did not need ambulance transport, you would be transported in a car or a cab. We don't expect a cab driver to be able to provide care; that's not what we expect. But when you call an ambulance, it's because you're sick; it's because you're frail; it's because you're at risk; it's because you need care.

Don't you think, Speaker, that the people who come and pick you up in those vehicles that look like ambulances but are not should have a minimum of knowledge as to how to care for you, should have a minimum of skills as to what you do when somebody gets sick, should have a minimum of competence to look after you if things go bad? None of that is in that bill. I waited way too long to settle for something like this.

I know exactly what they will do. They will say, "Oh, we have passed regulations. The patient medical transport services have now been regulated." And most people who don't dig any further will feel reassured. I can see all of those private companies that offer medical transportation services will be very happy to say, "We have now been regulated. We follow regulations. We are happy to report that we have regulated and we meet and exceed the regulations imposed by the government," and everybody will be so proud and so happy. But it will mean nothing. It will just mean that the wheels won't fall off

and the door won't open up. It won't mean that you will be getting quality care; it won't mean that the people beside you have any sort of training whatsoever to help you if something happens. That's a major problem with this bill.

I'm sure if I spoke to any one of my colleagues one on one and said, "Do you think that people in medical transportation services should be able to look after you if you code, if you have a heart attack, if you happen to start vomiting in the back of the ambulance, if you happen to have an epileptic seizure or if you happen to have anaphylactic shock from some medication that was just administered to you? Don't you think that you would like the people next to you?"—because there will be somebody sitting there next to you in the back of the ambulance who usually is dressed like they belong to the health profession, but it is all for show. There is no substance to this.

But if I ask my colleagues if they would like that person, everybody would say yes. Why don't we do this? We've already got this bill that opens up the health care act. We already have this bill in front of us that cleans up a bunch of other acts. While the acts are open, why don't we do the right thing and say, "Yes, we want the wheels to not fall off, we want the tires to not be flat and we want the vehicle to be acceptable to be driving on a road, and we will make sure that the person next to you is able to help you in your time of need when you are strapped onto a stretcher, unable to move." I think that's quite reasonable. I think that's what we expect when the government comes forward and regulates things, but that's not what we have here.

There are lots of other bits and pieces in that bill that are also problematic. Some of them, frankly, should be addressed in regulation and some of them are just beyond bizarre—things such as being able to file documents to the court electronically. Really? In 2015, we haven't found a way to let people file documents electronically?

It's easy to talk about, "Let's save the environment," and, "We are the most environmentally conscious government," but we will ask you to kill trees and print a whole bunch of stuff that you could just as well file electronically, especially when you have to file six, seven and eight copies of the same document because it may go to six or seven different people. Some of it is bizarre. The whole thing is bizarre.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 25, 2015, for private members' public business such that Mr. Clark assumes ballot item number 10 and Ms. Scott assumes ballot item number 56.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I am delighted to welcome to the Ontario Legislature a teacher and class from my riding of Kitchener Centre. Mr. Scott Jones and his class are here from Forest Heights Collegiate. Welcome.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome to the Ontario Legislature today Mr. Stephen Martin, who is the father of page captain Samuel Martin-Chase. They're from the town of Blue Mountains in the great riding of Simcoe-Grey.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Joining us today in the chamber—I don't think they're here yet—will be a number of people from the registered nursing profession: Linda Haslam-Stroud, registered nurse and president of the Ontario Nurses' Association; Marie Kelly, the CEO-CAO of the same organization; Sheree Bond, a media officer; Lauren Snowball, the campaigns officer; and Lawrence Walter, the government relations officer; as well as RNs Rhonda Millar, from North Bay Regional Health Centre; Colleen Morrow, from Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre; Cathryn Hoy, from Kingston General Hospital; Bernadette Robinson, from St. Francis Memorial Hospital; Sandra Bolyki, from University Health Network; Kurt Weber, Headwaters Health Care Centre; Angela Preocanin, St. Joseph's Healthcare, in Hamilton; Donna Bain, St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton; James Murray, London Health Sciences Centre; and Joanne Wilkinson, London Health Sciences Centre.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker and fellow colleagues, please welcome to this House the young girls from grade 5 from Holy Name of Mary, from Mississauga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'd like to welcome my friend Liam Dutaillis, who is here all the way from Newcastle, Australia. He's on an exchange from the Australian Labor Party, here to witness what we do at Queen's Park. Welcome, Liam.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the House's attention to a special birthday today. My parliamentary assistant, the member for Sudbury, Glenn Thibeault, has a birthday today.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'd like to welcome our page captain—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure that the other people who want to introduce somebody want people to hear.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome our page captain Soham Shah's parents today—his mother, Dipanki Shah, and father, Hetal Shah—and his aunt Ketal Shukla and grandfather, Ramesh Shah. They should be joining us in the next few minutes.

Mr. Joe Dickson: We will be welcoming this morning several grade 10 classes from J. Clarke Richardson Collegiate in Ajax. We welcome them, when they arrive.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us in the Legislature today are students from MicroSkills, from Don Valley East. We welcome them to the Legislature.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Larry McCloskey, who is in the House in our gallery today. We had the great pleasure of meeting on accessibility and the great work that Carleton University does in Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

ANNIVERSARY OF SHOOTINGS IN OTTAWA

ANNIVERSAIRE DE LA FUSILLADE À OTTAWA

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to remember the one-year anniversary of the shootings on Parliament Hill in Ottawa and the death of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes, followed by a moment of silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to provide each party with up to five minutes to speak on the issue and one minute of silence afterwards. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to mark the anniversary of a day that shocked and saddened our nation last year: the violent attack on Parliament Hill and at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Je prends la parole aujourd'hui devant l'Assemblée législative pour commémorer une journée qui a bouleversé et attristé notre nation. Je veux parler de la violente attaque survenue sur la Colline du Parlement et le Monument commémoratif de guerre du Canada à Ottawa.

The events of October 22, 2014, are burned into our collective memories. Corporal Nathan Cirillo was just 24 years old when he was killed as he stood guard at the memorial that honours the sacrifices of our soldiers. In just a few awful moments, a senseless act of violence took the life of a soldier, a father, a son and a friend. We must remember his life, his service and his sacrifice, and also the sacrifice of others who have died in the line of duty—soldiers like Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, killed in Quebec only two days before Corporal Cirillo. We must remember them because every person in uniform stands prepared to make that sacrifice every day, as so many have, so that we may continue to live in a province and a country that is safe, secure and free.

Il nous incombe de nous souvenir de la vie du caporal Cirillo et de l'adjudant Vincent, de leur service et de leur sacrifice, et de nous montrer reconnaissants que tant d'hommes et de femmes soient prêts à faire ce sacrifice au nom du Canada.

There is no doubt that what happened on October 22, 2014, will always weigh heavily on our hearts. Other people were injured, and the lives of members of Parliament, public servants and bystanders were at risk. But no

other lives were lost, and this is a tribute to the quick actions and bravery of law enforcement and security personnel at the scene.

Today, as I extend my condolences on behalf of the government of Ontario to the family and friends of Nathan Cirillo, I also join with people across the country in honouring the brave security personnel and first responders who kept Ottawa safe a year ago today and who keep all of us safe every single day.

The events of a year ago sent a ripple of fear and uncertainty across our province and our country. I want to repeat what I said in this chamber on that day: People who use violence to undermine democracy want to silence us. We refuse to be silenced. We will not be silenced. Nous refusons de nous taire, et nous ne nous tairons pas.

We will carry on with the business of this House and the business of our democratic society. Today, as we honour the life and sacrifice of Corporal Cirillo, we affirm that in the face of tragedy, all of us in this Legislature and all Ontarians will remain united and continue to uphold the ideals of democracy, freedom and peace. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise today in remembrance of the Ottawa shooting at Parliament Hill a year ago today, and to the government House leader for providing this opportunity and this initiative.

Corporal Nathan Cirillo, a reservist from Hamilton, was a very proud member of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada. The cold-blooded killing of Corporal Cirillo as he stood on guard at the National War Memorial shocked the country, but it also strengthened our nation's resolve for vigilance.

On October 22, 2014, Canadians were united in sadness over this horrific and cowardly act. Corporal Cirillo was only 24 years old. As stark of a reminder as this senseless act represented of the dangers that exist in our society, we are thankful for the example of courage and compassion shown that day by private citizens and the emergency personnel who, without any regard for their own safety, came quickly to Nathan's aid in spite of the unknown circumstances. I would like to commend the RCMP, the city of Ottawa police and the House of Commons security for their swift action that fateful day.

1040

I was in the House that day as a caucus member in the government caucus room, mere feet from where the shooter travelled through the building. I am grateful to the security detail for bringing that incident to a swift resolution and for preventing any further loss of innocent lives. Certainly, there are some moments in life that you never forget, that are etched in your memory, and for me, that is one of them.

I also want to pay tribute to Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, who was killed earlier that week in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu by a man reported to have been influenced by the global jihadist movement. Warrant Officer Vincent was a 28-year veteran of the Canadian Armed

Forces and was considering retirement to become a cabinetmaker when he was killed. He was only 53 years old.

Let us never forget all our fallen heroes like Nathan and Patrice, who served in defence of our country and our province. They paid the ultimate sacrifice so we can live in a free, democratic and safe society. Today, we honour the memory of these fine men.

I remember the days that followed in Ottawa, the sense of pride there was in Canada, the sense of pride there was in Ontario, how everyone was united in the honour of that courage and the honour of their fallen. It was one of the many moments that we were tremendously proud to be Canadian.

On behalf of our PC caucus, we send our deepest sympathies to their families and to all who knew them as we express our sincere appreciation for their service to their country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm honoured today to rise on behalf of Ontario's New Democrat caucus to pay tribute first to Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent, as well as to one of Hamilton's fallen sons.

A year ago, all of Canada was shaken at the events that took place at our National War Memorial on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. We were saddened by the tragic loss of Corporal Nathan Cirillo of Hamilton's Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders regiment. I've had the pleasure of representing this part of Hamilton where that regiment is based, at the armouries, as both a city councillor and as an MPP, and I spent many, many Remembrance Days with these incredible reservists.

The outpouring of support in response to this tragedy a year ago made me proud to be a Hamiltonian and a Canadian. I was proud to witness the spontaneous outpouring of support from my community in Hamilton and across the country for Corporal Cirillo and Warrant Officer Vincent. The strength and resilience of my community, and of Canadians, is an inspiration.

A beautiful monument appeared outside the armoury in downtown Hamilton, and crowds of people gathered to witness the procession on James Street North and to show their support. Even Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II was quick to write to the family and sometime later held an audience with members of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders regiment.

Corporal Cirillo's family didn't want people to mourn his death but rather to celebrate his life. So last night in Hamilton, at sunset, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders held a commemorative ceremony to celebrate Nathan's life. Many, many community members joined them.

Those who knew him say that he was fearless, that he had a passion for service, a passion for the army and, perhaps most importantly, that he was a kind and loving father. All of our thoughts and prayers go out to his family.

We are grateful for the brave women and men like these two soldiers who gave their lives in service to our

country. Their deaths are a stark reminder that our men and women in uniform put themselves in harm's way even when the risk they face is unexpected.

New Democrats across Ontario say thank you to those women and men who serve, who have served and who, in some cases, have given their lives for our country. We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude and a debt of gratitude to veterans and their families. We know that without their sacrifice, we would not be standing here today enjoying the freedoms that they fought for and which we all hold so dear.

Today, New Democrats join with all members of this House to say thank you to the loyal and courageous soldiers who have and will continue to risk their lives for our safety, for our freedom and for our democracy. We all stand in solidarity with our fellow Canadians to proudly say thank you to Corporal Nathan Cirillo and Warrant Officer Patrice Vincent. We will never forget your service and we will never forget your sacrifice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their heartfelt and thoughtful comments. At this time, by the motion, I would invite all people who are able to please stand for a moment of silence in remembrance of the situation.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Bill 122 is a failure. It caused the longest teacher strike in 25 years. It caused the government to walk away from negotiations multiple times and it has now cost the people of Ontario millions of dollars to pay for this government's failed bargaining process. The Liberal government gave \$1 million to OSSTF, \$1 million to OECTA and half a million dollars to AEFO.

Interjections.

Mr. Patrick Brown: This side of the House may find that funny. I do not. Will the Premier tell the House: Where did that money come from?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to just take a moment to go a little bit back in history because I think it's important for everyone to understand the context. There was a time in this province when school boards had a different role to play. School boards had the opportunity to fund education at the local level. They had taxing authority. Each year, they would go to the municipality and they would express their concerns and their desires for an increase in the mill rate, and then there would be the appropriate money that would flow to the school board.

Mr. Speaker, that was all changed when the previous Conservative government took that right to allocate money—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —to raise taxes in their jurisdictions. That change—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Right after I say, "Order," somebody starts. The member for Leeds-Grenville will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: At that time, a number of us were involved in the debates in our communities, whether as school trustees or whether as parent advocates, and we said, "You know what's going to happen now? You're going to have to have a provincial process because if the funder is only the province, then there needs to be a provincial process."

I'll follow up in the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: I'm going to try to rephrase this in terms that are quite direct. We know that these payments are a small part of the story, but the government didn't negotiate alone. They had other groups on their side of the table against the unions. The Ontario Public School Boards' Association, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association and ACÉPO all negotiated on behalf of the province as part of the flawed two-tiered bargaining system.

Will the Premier tell us how much money the Liberal government gave those associations to negotiate these contracts? Where did the money go to? Where did it come from? Please enlighten the House.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I need to continue to lay out this history because the chaos that the Leader of the Opposition would have experienced when he was in high school was actually created because of those changes that were made by the previous government. We were—many of us—involved, as I say, in warning the government of the day that there would have to be a provincial process to take into account the fact that the taxing authority had been taken away from the school boards.

For a number of years when we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're inching closer to warnings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: For a number of years when we came into office, we were dealing with the aftermath of that reality. Everyone knows that it's very difficult to undo a structural change—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —like the one that was made by the previous government.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a simple question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So we worked closely with all of our education partners to develop the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, and that's what's important. There needed to be a provincial process. We worked with our partners to set it up.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again for the Premier: All things being equal, it's safe to assume that this government would have given other associations the same payout they gave the unions. That means the Liberal government could have spent well upwards of \$5 million for their mistakes, for their flawed bargaining process.

Will the Premier answer two simple questions? I will try again: How much money did she pay the unions and their associations for their bargaining costs? And, number two, where did that money come from? A direct question—please answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is, what we have to do is come to an agreement. We're talking about—is it \$22 billion or \$23 billion?—a \$23-billion endeavour in Ontario. That's what publicly funded education is—

Mr. Steve Clark: Answer the question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville is warned.

Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We need a working partnership with our education workers and with trustee associations—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The legislation that we put in place helped to establish a process that was made necessary because of the changes that had been made in the structure of school board governance. That legislation formalized an informal process that had been necessary to put that provincial process in place.

In 2004, 2008 and 2012, those provincial discussion processes were different because the changes had been made. We had to create that provincial process. We did it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is again for the Premier. Since she has no interest in talking about the \$1-million payout, let's talk about the Hydro One fire sale.

The people of northern Ontario stand to become some of the hardest hit by this sale. Small communities scattered throughout the north rely on Hydro One transmission lines to power their homes and businesses.

While those lines might not be profitable for Hydro One, the cost is offset by the profits that Hydro One was making in highly populated areas like Brampton. But this Premier has already sold off Hydro One Brampton, so the ability to subsidize for more expensive transmission is gone.

Will the Premier guarantee the residents and businesses of northern Ontario that her fire sale of Hydro One isn't going to drive hydro prices in northern Ontario through the roof?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment on the details of the process that we're undergoing.

But I will just remind the Leader of the Opposition that the decisions we've made around broadening the ownership of Hydro One, the protections that we are putting in place, are a direct result of lessons we learned in the fire sale that that party put in place when they sold off the 407.

We made it very, very clear that we would not undergo such an initiative that would not put protections in place for the people of Ontario, and that the way hydro rates are determined is through the Ontario Energy Board. We made it very clear that we would guarantee that there would be access to reliable power across this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: What about the north?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: To get nuclear power produced from the Darlington generators to Timmins, Ontario, power must travel over 600 kilometres. Building 600 kilometres of transmission lines is incredibly expensive, and the return on that investment for Hydro One is minimal.

If a private company is faced with a similar decision to build 600 kilometres of power lines to reach a northern community like Timmins, they may just say no. They will say no even though those transmission lines are in the best interests of northern Ontario.

My question is for the Premier: When faced with the choice between what's in the best interests of northern Ontario and what's in the best interests of a private company, if that private company chooses an approach that is not in the best interests of northern Ontario, will you do the right thing and tell them to build those transmission lines?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There are members of the Progressive Conservative Party across this province who are wondering where this leader stands. His party has a specific policy to broaden the ownership of Ontario Power Generation, broaden the ownership of Hydro One and sell shares to the public, and it specifically says they will rely on the Ontario Energy Board to regulate rates. That is their policy.

If he is now disavowing his own party's policy, let him stand up and say so. He's talking out of both sides of his mouth, and it's about time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have something to say, but I'm waiting until I have attention.

The minister will withdraw.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Withdraw, thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And as far as the rest of it is concerned, shouting people down is not what this place is about.

Final supplementary, please.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, back to the Premier: Ontario's economic prosperity was achieved because of successive PC governments who understood that the availability of affordable power was good public policy. The loss of majority control of Hydro One means the government loses the ability to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. Start the clock.

Please put your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I didn't realize the pitch for affordable energy would strike such a nerve.

The loss of a majority control of Hydro One means that the government loses the ability to expand transmission lines as a matter of good public policy. If a privately owned Hydro One feels that expanding transmission lines to the Ring of Fire, for example, is a bad decision for a private company, they may not do it, and that's bad news for northern Ontario. Doesn't this side get it? This is going to affect northern Ontario.

Will the Premier acknowledge to the House today that this might hamper the ability to see the Ring of Fire come to realization—that dream for northern Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member does not know what's going on in this House. He doesn't realize that there is a bill ready to be approved in this House that will give the cabinet the authority to designate where transmission will go—not Hydro One. We're doing that to protect the public. There are many things we are doing with respect to broadening the ownership of Hydro One that give control over planning, over what is happening in the sector. He does not know what the IESO does in terms of planning. He is not aware of the legislation that's going on in this House. He should go back and do some research.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has said that deciding to sell off Hydro One was a difficult decision and that, despite overwhelming opposition from Ontarians, it was necessary because there just wasn't any other way to get the money.

The new federal government has already pledged \$2 billion for GO Transit in the GTHA and \$2.6 billion for SmartTrack, which must come as an enormous relief to the Premier, because now even she has to admit that she doesn't need to sell off Hydro One after all.

Will this Premier do what is right for Ontario: stop the sell-off of Hydro One and negotiate a fair deal for infrastructure with the federal government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, no. We have a responsibility at the provincial level of government to build infrastructure, to make investments that are necessary across the province. I would argue that is the same responsibility that the municipal governments have, and I know that municipal governments across this province are taking that responsibility very seriously.

It is terrific that we now have a federal government that understands that they need to partner with provincial and municipal governments. It's not up to one level of government. It is our responsibility to continue to implement our plan, to live up to the commitments that we made to the people of Ontario, and that is exactly what we're going to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I wish the Premier could hear herself, because she sounds ridiculous. Forty per cent of Ontario municipalities have asked this Premier to stop the sell-off of Hydro One. She used to say that but for our federal partner, she wouldn't have to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Order.

Please ask.

1100

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She used to say that, because there was a lack of a federal partner, she had to sell off Hydro One, but now she has the federal partner, and she's still saying she has to sell off Hydro One. Speaker, it makes no sense whatsoever; 80% of Ontarians don't want her to sell off Hydro One.

I would have thought it would have come as a relief to this Premier that the federal commitments to infrastructure actually absolve her of her need to sell off Hydro One. She should be standing up for what is right for Ontario, and she should be ensuring that those federal dollars come for our infrastructure process, for our infrastructure needs, and that that money moves quickly. Does she believe that Ontario's fair share is coming?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I stand up for the people of Ontario every single day. That is exactly what I do. That's my job. It's my responsibility. I will continue to do that while I am in this job, because that is what has led us to the plan that we are now implementing. We know that the investments that are necessary in this province are investments in roads and bridges and in transit. We know that we have to invest in people's talent and skills, and draw business to this province.

Speaker, a cornerstone of that economic viability is our infrastructure investment. In the same way that, when we came into office, municipalities didn't throw up their hands and say, "Oh well, we're not going to continue to invest in our people or stand up for our communities"—they continued to do their work—we are going to continue to do our work, but now we have a partner at the federal level that's going to work with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Talking about standing up for Ontarians and actually standing up for Ontarians are two different things. Ontarians don't want Hydro One to be sold off. That's the standing up that this Premier should be doing. The bottom line is this: The Premier seems determined to plow ahead, despite the fact that the federal government will be providing over \$400 million annually in a new infrastructure program.

If the Premier isn't going to listen to Ontarians, then the people have to wonder who the heck she is listening to. Will she finally do what is right, stop the sell-off of Hydro One and get to work ensuring that Ontario's fair share of federal infrastructure money flows?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's just analyze exactly what the leader of the third party is suggesting. She's suggesting that we basically go tools down on the projects that are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The conversation that's going on between the member from Essex and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services is not helpful at all; it's distracting.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: She's suggesting that we just put tools down on the projects that are in the works. She's saying we just sit back now and abdicate our responsibility to make the investments that we have committed to the people of Ontario; that we not continue to work with the communities in the northwest of this province; that we not continue to work with the communities of the east and the southwest of the province, to invest in their infrastructure, in their roads and bridges and in their transit; but that somehow we just wait for the federal government to come to the table. They're at the table. They're going to work with us, but we have a responsibility.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. During the last general election, the Premier and her Minister of Health said that they would not cut front-line care and that they would not cut nursing positions. In 2015, there have been 625 registered nursing positions eliminated in Ontario's nursing workforce. This amounts to the loss of more than one million hours of RN care for Ontario patients.

These aren't my numbers, Speaker, these are the numbers provided by the nurses who are here in the gallery today. Will the Premier explain to these nurses why it is that the government is breaking their promise and cutting nursing positions and hours all across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is going to want to speak to this in the supplementary but let me just be clear that there are 24,000 more nurses working in Ontario today than there were in 2003—24,000 more nurses. We understand that there is a transition in communities where there is more community care that is

being set up. We understand that hospitals are working and that we need to continue to work with the LHINs, with the hospitals in this province, with the community providers to make sure that people get the care that they need when they need it and where they need it.

But there are 24,000 more nurses in Ontario than there were in 2003. We have added to that complement. We will continue to increase health care funding in this province, Mr. Speaker, as we go through the transformation that is required because of the demographics in this province. That is the responsible thing to do to make our health care system sustainable and to allow it to thrive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Ontario patients deserve more nursing hours, not less. The scientific evidence is clear: Every nurse being cut out of our hospitals puts patient care and patients' lives at risk. We know that the government is cutting nursing hours and laying off nurses across our province. The Liberals have tried to deflect blame to our hospitals, to the LHINs, to anybody else that they can point to, but they have frozen hospital funding for the last four years—the longest unbroken period of real-dollar, public hospital cuts in Ontario's entire history.

Will this Premier commit to stopping nursing cuts and to providing Ontario's hospitals with the funding that they need to provide proper nursing levels?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to start by welcoming our nurses here. Linda Haslam-Stroud, representing the Ontario Nurses' Association, is here today. She has brought with her, importantly, registered nurses from right across this province. I know they had a press conference this morning to express the concerns they have with regard to retaining nurses in our hospitals and other environments, to the work that we've done but need to continue to do to stabilize the nursing workforce across the province.

We've made significant investments to help stabilize the nursing workforce, but we do know that there is much more work to do. I have reached out to Linda today and indicated—I know that she's anxious to meet with me, and I've committed to meeting with her to talk specifically about that issue of stabilization and nursing retention—the critically vital work that our nurses, our RNs, do in our hospitals, as they do right across the province. I'm prepared to talk more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, registered nurses have specialized skills that are crucial to complex patient care, but the share of RNs in Ontario's nursing workforce is falling, and we have the second-worst RN ratio in Canada, with less than one registered nurse for 100 people.

Nurses are suffering from increased workloads, from epic stress, from burnout, and a deep professional concern from seeing patients not receiving the care that they need. Anybody who has been in hospital recently—over the last couple of years, in fact—and talked to the nurses

who are working in the hospitals will tell you the same thing.

Will this Premier commit to the nurses here today, and to all Ontarians, Speaker, to stopping the cuts to nurses and nursing hours across our province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that Ontarians do understand. I've got the figures for RNs in this province right in front of me for the last five years, and in every single one of those five years, the number of nurses—the number of RNs, specifically, working in this province—has increased year over year over year, every single year in the last five years up until the most recent data, which is 2014–15, of course. And I also want to remind Ontarians that, in fact, it was under an NDP government in the 1990s where there were 3,000 fewer nurses working in this province from the beginning to the end of their tenure in government. The number of RNs in Ontario fell by almost 3,000 persons in this province under the NDP. Of course, we know the PCs fired 6,000 nurses and referred to them as obsolete hula hoops.

Mr. Speaker, I commit to working with ONA, as any responsible government should. We continue to work hard to stabilize the RN workforce. I've committed to working with Linda and her team to see how specifically we could work on this challenging issue of retention.

PROBATION SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. For weeks following the tragic deaths in the Ottawa valley, I asked the Attorney General and the Premier how they intend to act on the recommendations made by the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee. They have yet to provide a satisfactory answer.

1110

According to the chair of the local community policing advisory committee, Renfrew county's single probation officer is overloaded because of the failings of this Liberal government. The province's lack of support to probation and parole services in places like Renfrew county is the reason why repeat offenders like Mr. Borutski have not been more closely monitored.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier failed these victims by refusing to allocate the adequate resources to ensure that violent offenders are more closely monitored?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I have received a copy of the October report on domestic violence with respect to what the coroner's work has done in this regard. It contains a number of government-wide recommendations, which I have reviewed.

As I've said before here, this is a very serious issue and should not ever be tolerated in Ontario. We all have a responsibility to find out what else we can do. The report, as I'm sure the member opposite knows, highlights the importance of public education and preventing domestic violence.

In terms of what happened in Ontario, the tragic incident that happened in Renfrew county, I did speak to the executive director of the sexual assault centre there.

While we have a number of initiatives to support women and men who face domestic violence, we know there's more to do as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go back to the Premier. Really, it is a matter of priority. I appreciate the minister of women's issues comment about the shelters.

This is very much a serious matter, that the government has not provided the resources to ensure that Ontarians can live in their homes without fear. In 2012, your government's own report from the review committee recommended that supervision for offenders on probation would benefit from ongoing collateral contacts to confirm the status of the offender. The report also said that when an offender fails to meet the terms, progressive enforcement must align with the level of risk.

The oversight that is currently in place is just not acceptable. Three women have lost their lives because of this government's inaction—and, since, I've been asking the questions. So why does the Premier refuse to recognize the needs of the probation officers in Ontario so this doesn't happen again?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister responsible—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hold on.

Minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, the needs in rural Ontario are acute and real, and that is why the Minister of Community and Social Services and her ministry have invested significantly in terms of shelters and services, an increase of 61% since 2003.

I just want to highlight, if I may, that when the PCs were in power, they cut shelter services by 29% in one year alone. They eliminated all counselling—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That list unfortunately goes on and on in terms of the cuts that were faced by that sector.

However, our commitment is to supporting women who face sexual and domestic violence. We have our sexual violence action plan. We have a permanent round table on—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Since the beginning of the process, the Minister of Education has failed to do her job when it comes to bargain-

ing. The minister has been playing games, first with major delays, then with her own so-called confusion about what was being negotiated at each of the tables: class sizes, professional development, delays, net-zero agreements, not to mention the various different versions of the story we have heard over the past year.

The minister has no credibility anymore. The minister will say or do anything to save face. The result? Chaos in our schools.

Will the Premier admit that her Minister of Education has failed our kids and their families and that she has lost all credibility?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would note that the Ontario Labour Relations Board actually agreed with my version of what was going on last spring, so she might reconsider that question. But I will talk to you, Speaker. What I would like to say is, we obviously have three outstanding contracts that we need to get agreement on: the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the CUPE education workers and the OSSTF education workers. What I can say to the House is that, in each of those cases, we have either established dates or the mediator is actively working to sort out dates. People have agreed that we need dates. In all of those instances, negotiations will convene. That's how we get agreements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: In fact, yesterday in scrum the minister said that there were six outstanding agreements, so thank you for making my point.

Speaker, back to the Premier: It's clear that these negotiations have been botched from the very beginning. Since day one, all of us in this House and across Ontario have been hearing excuse after excuse from the minister. The minister hasn't been taking negotiations seriously. She has been blaming everyone except herself—being perplexed about the facts when it comes to tough issues, forcing kids to pay the price while chaos flourished in our schools due to her inability to bargain effectively.

Speaker, the minister simply doesn't have credibility anymore. It's time for her to go. My question is simple: Will the Premier tell her Minister of Education to resign immediately?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Let's get an update on all nine of the tables here, okay? We have three tables where we have ratified collective agreements. Those are the teachers in the English Catholic, the English public secondary and both French systems—all of those teachers. We have three groups that are engaged in job action, which are the people whom I am concerned we get back to the table with. They are the elementary teachers, CUPE and the OSSTF education workers. We either have dates or we are working with the mediator on establishing dates with all three of those.

We have three other groups with whom we are continuing to negotiate. In fact, one of them is at the hotel today. The other three groups, who are all education workers, we also need to get agreements with. We are negotiating with them and we're not having job action with them. That's the update.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Energy. I know that as we move to broaden the ownership of Hydro One, the mechanisms of oversight are changing to those that apply to publicly traded companies. As part of our government's commitment to transparency and accountability, Hydro One will be required, through legislation, to create an internal ombuds-person who would report publicly and continue to protect consumers.

The minister has previously informed us that Hydro One has been working closely with Denis Desautels, a former Auditor General of Canada, to ensure that terms of reference for the position are appropriate, that adequate resources will be provided and that the successful candidate has the prerequisite skills and experience to successfully perform this important role.

Could the minister please inform the House if there is an update on Hydro One's search for an ombuds-person?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you to the member for Newmarket–Aurora for the question, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we asked Denis Desautels, former Auditor General of Canada, to oversee the establishment of the ombuds-person's office to ensure transparency and accountability for customers.

We are pleased that Hydro One has selected a very strong, professional and experienced ombuds-person in Fiona Crean, most recently the ombuds-person for the city of Toronto. As Hydro One's new ombuds-person, Ms. Crean will provide an independent and impartial perspective on matters referred to her by Hydro One customers. She will also establish an appeal process for unresolved complaints to the independent Ontario Energy Board. Ms. Crean will report directly to the board of directors in order to ensure independence and to allow the board to provide strong support for any recommendations made.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you for the update, Minister. It's great to hear that Hydro One, with the assistance of Denis Desautels, has managed to hire such an excellent and experienced candidate as Fiona Crean. It is reassuring to hear that, as Hydro One's new ombuds-person, she will report publicly in order to continue to protect consumers.

Now that Hydro One has selected Ms. Crean as its new ombuds-person, Hydro One must ensure that the office is established in such a fashion as to ensure independence and accountability. I know we've asked Denis Desautels to oversee the establishment of the ombuds-person's office to ensure transparency and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the minister inform the House as to Ms. Crean's experience as an ombuds-person, as well as if she has any experience in establishing and setting up an ombuds-person's office?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Ms. Crean was appointed by Toronto city council as Toronto's first ombudsman in

November 2008. The office began to offer services on April 6, 2009. I might add for members that she prefers the term “ombudsman,” so henceforth I’ll refer to her as ombudsman rather than ombudsperson, by her choice.

She brings to this position decades of professional experience dedicated to fairness in government and social justice. She also established the office of ombudsman for York University and was executive director of the Ontario Ombudsman’s office. This background has given her significant experience in conflict resolution and the promotion of accountability and responsiveness by large organizations.

Ms. Crean will ensure that Hydro One customers will continue to be protected and ensure that any concerns are being heard and acted upon. An excellent choice by the board of Hydro One.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Attorney General. The minister committed to me in this House on Tuesday to bring forward my concerns to the chair of the Safety, Licensing Appeals and Standards Tribunals, SLASTO for short.

Jeffrey Ferland and Canadians for Properly Built Homes have been requesting the transcripts from a proceeding at the LAT for over a year. The request has been met with a year of prolonged silence. The apocryphal element of this story is that the LAT insisted in February that the transcript was lost, but they are also now telling the plaintiff that copies may or might be obtained by filing a freedom-of-information request.

Transcripts of testimony and evidence are essential, and they must be available or access to justice is denied. Is the minister’s tribunal purposely suppressing these documents, or are they totally incompetent and have lost the transcripts?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you for the question. The administrative tribunal hears 180,000 cases a year. It plays a vital role in Ontario’s justice system. Tribunals use their specialized expertise to adjudicate on a wide variety of disputes in an independent and impartial manner. So our government has built an effective, efficient and accessible administrative justice system.

On this side of the House, you know—if the member opposite has a problem or one of his constituents has a problem, I invite them to write directly to the chair of the tribunal. We have very competent people at the tribunal, we have a very competent chair, and they always work to improve the system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Attorney General: I guess you didn’t hear my first question. They have met with a year of prolonged silence.

The minister disagreed with me on Tuesday when I suggested our tribunals are in dire need of fixing and modernization. She cited her confidence, once again, in her unnamed professional experts. Today, I’ve offered

you the first of a litany of examples of failings occurring at our judicial tribunals.

Can the minister commit today to having her ministry investigate SLASTO and determine if this transcript is indeed missing or if the LAT is actively suppressing information from the plaintiff? Will she act on the multitude of public complaints and commit to conducting a thorough investigation and report back to this House on the state of our broken tribunals and these people who are being denied access to justice under her watch?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I find it strange to have this question, this concern, this morning, but sure, we’re going to look into it.

I have been visiting law firms across Ontario recently, and they always give me the model of our administrative tribunal. And do you know what? They want more rather than less. Our administrative tribunal is working. If there is concern, like I said, they can write directly to the chair of the tribunal and I’m sure she will take action.

I will come back to the member—not to the House, but to the member—about his complaint.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday we learned that the Minister of Community and Social Services has spent an additional \$21 million to fix her Social Assistance Management System since last March. The flaws of the new system created chaos for vulnerable people receiving social assistance. The minister thought the system was ready last November. She was wrong. Now she says that this time the system will work.

Can the minister guarantee that this final version of SAMS will not create more chaos for people like the last final version did?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I’m certainly pleased to give an update on the situation with SAMS. We have acknowledged that the implementation of SAMS would require additional costs for transition. As PricewaterhouseCoopers has pointed out, we’re dealing with one of the most complex delivery systems in North America. We have some 570,000 cases on social assistance. We have 11,000 users of the system in some 250 locations. We have a combination of provincial staff delivering ODSP and municipal staff delivering Ontario Works.

I would like to thank all of our partners in this endeavour for their dedication, both those on the front lines, our union partners and the project team, as well as PwC.

We have addressed the issues. We are adopting all 19 recommendations that PwC made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: After rushing a flawed system out the door, social assistance cheques went missing and vulnerable Ontarians suffered needlessly. Yesterday, the minister released a statement that offered absolutely no apology for the chaos that she created in the system. In-

stead, her priority was to distract from her government's negligence with the claim that the new system is simply cheaper than it was to implement the old system. The minister does not understand that the new system is not cheaper for vulnerable Ontarians whose cheques go missing.

Why does the minister think that her job is to justify her own negligence instead of making sure that no more vulnerable Ontarians are harmed?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Of course, we recognize that SAMS is a system that serves the most vulnerable, and that makes this investment so important. Support for front-line workers, more training and more testing is definitely something worth investing in.

At this point, perhaps I could outline some of the great benefits we have with SAMS. People will recall that the Auditor General noted that the previous system introduced in 2001-02 by a previous government was outdated and did not allow for strict adherence to the rules related to social assistance.

What have we now? Guided by our front-line working group, we now have information that caseworkers want, in a way they want it. We have customizable home pages, case-at-a-glance screens, flexibility to respond to changing client needs and now the ability to automate tasks that had to previously be done manually. We have a stable system. We've delivered seven million payments to more than 900,000—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure. As the minister knows, our government has worked very hard at growing our economy and attracting jobs to our province. We all know that Ontario can only move forward economically by being at the cutting edge of innovation.

As the auto sector is a large and important employer in our province historically and continues to employ many people in Durham, what is the minister doing to encourage innovation in that sector?

1130

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think that is an excellent question.

Today, Ontario continues to enjoy a very strong presence in the North American auto sector. It directly or indirectly employs almost half a million Ontarians, and Ontario and Michigan continue to be in the top two in terms of sub-national governments producing automobiles.

But we continue to fight for future mandates and growth in a fiercely competitive global economy. We've done well in today's auto sector, but that sector is in a state of technological disruption. We need to make sure that Ontario continues to lead as disruption courses through our auto sector. Our choice is either to lead this

disruption in Ontario or be swept up by it, and we choose to lead.

Last week, our visionary Minister of Transportation demonstrated this by announcing that Ontario roads would be open to autonomous vehicle testing—a very important decision for innovation in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to thank the minister for his answer and his continuing work on this important file.

The auto industry is incredibly important to our community in Durham, and I know that many of my constituents will be pleased to hear of our efforts to encourage innovation.

As the minister knows, Ontario is first in attracting foreign direct investment in North America, and the minister has worked hard to continue this legacy.

Can the minister provide details of his announcement in Waterloo and what it will mean to the rest of us across our great province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me put it this way: Two weeks ago I returned from Silicon Valley, and every time I come back from there, I'm inspired by the growing recognition of the strength of the Toronto-Waterloo corridor, which is very much becoming a globally significant innovation driver. I can tell you that Ontario's decision to open roads to testing of autonomous vehicles was greeted with great enthusiasm by industry innovators like Tesla and Cisco in the valley. I was pleased to join our visionary Minister of Transportation and MPPs from Kitchener Centre and Cambridge in making this announcement in Waterloo last week. Waterloo really is the west anchor of our Toronto-Waterloo innovation corridor.

We're now the first province in Canada to open up our roads to the testing of autonomous vehicles. This stakes out our role as a global leader in auto, in auto innovation and in the innovation sector as a whole in North America.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is for the Premier. Two weeks ago, I asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing twice about thousands of taxpayers' dollars which were used to purchase a luxury eight-day vacation package in South Africa instead of going to social housing as it was intended. He couldn't explain it or tell us whether there were any efforts made to get any of the money back. Perhaps that's because it actually happened under the Premier's watch when she was Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Can the Premier explain how someone was able to use social housing dollars to go on a luxury South African vacation under your watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Minister of Rural Affairs is going to want to add to this in the supplementary, but what I can tell the member opposite—under my watch, when I was Minister of Municipal Affairs, there were questions raised about this organization that had been set up by the previous gov-

ernment. We began to set in place guidelines, because it was important that we tighten up the processes that had actually been very loose under the previous government. Those guidelines were developed.

I know that the Minister of Rural Affairs will want to add to the comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Back to the Premier: Premier, we're talking about a luxury package vacation, complete with winery tours and award-winning restaurants. I've read the government's independent review, and it failed to find any of these expenses or take any steps to get the money back.

On Tuesday, the co-op housing federation are coming to the Legislature, and these are people who are stretching every dollar to provide housing for people in need. This abuse is an insult to those people and 168,000 people who are waiting on the list for public housing, and the Ontario taxpayer.

Can the Premier tell us whether the government has taken any steps to recover the thousands of taxpayer dollars that were spent on luxury South African vacations under her watch?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I appreciate the supplementary from my colleague from Oxford.

When the government of Ontario learned of the situation, our government took swift action. We employed an independent third party to come in to do a comprehensive review. Our request initiated an independent review. The review has been verified with HSC and we've taken the right steps towards improving accountability and transparency.

Actions taken to date: We've refined its business activities. We've streamlined the organization structure. We've reduced overhead administrative costs and enhanced corporate reporting transparency. We revised board remuneration expense policies so they're in line with the Management Board of Cabinet directives. We've committed to invite a third-party reviewer back again in 2016 to report on the implementation and the recommendations, and provide any additional changes that our government needs to take on this issue.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Since 2009, PET scans are available to people in northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario and southern Ontario, but for patients living in northeastern Ontario, we still don't have access to PET scan technology without having to travel really long distances.

But, Speaker, I have good news: Mobile PET scanners are becoming more frequently used in Ontario and they could travel up north, but we need the minister's permission before a mobile PET scanner can come to northern Ontario.

My question is simple: When will the minister agree to let a mobile PET scanner come to Health Sciences

North in Sudbury to serve the people living in the northeast?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to begin by acknowledging the hard work of the member from Sudbury, in fact, on this specific issue, because earlier this year he actually invited me to Sudbury to sit down and have a meeting with health care professionals on a variety of issues, including specifically to look at this issue of the long-standing request by the citizens of Sudbury and advocates—whether it would be prudent and appropriate to invest in a PET scanner for Sudbury itself. So I want to commend him for that hard work.

It was a result of his hard work and also that meeting that I engaged the good advice and expertise of the province-wide PET scanner steering committee. It's a steering committee that exists within Cancer Care Ontario, but its role specifically is to provide that expert advice on where, when and how PET scanning facilities and provisions should be made available to Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Tonight, hundreds of people will join the Sam Bruno family and friends at the Caruso Club to raise money for a permanent PET scan for Sudbury, and to bring a mobile PET scan to our region. The mobile PET scan will not cost Health Sciences North a penny, it will not add to the provincial budget expenses, but it will bring fairness and equitable access to this technology to the people of the northeast.

The people of the northeast are ready, Speaker; Health Sciences North is ready; mobile PET scanners are standing by.

Minister, after making us wait for six years, could you please do the right thing and grant the permission for a mobile PET scan to come to Sudbury?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I think Ontarians would agree that we are doing the right thing. We're doing the responsible thing. First of all, the wait time for getting a PET scan in this province—anywhere in this province—is two weeks, so people, including in Sudbury, have access to that wait time of two weeks, or sometimes even less.

I want to acknowledge that for the residents of Sudbury, there is an additional challenge. It is a big challenge of them having to travel, often long distances, often with or without family members and in a situation where they're challenged by, perhaps, a physical illness themselves. So there is that added dimension to this, which we're taking very seriously.

I would hope the member opposite, who is a health care professional, would agree with me that we need to take a responsible approach to this. We've given the question to the PET scanner committee. I understand that recently, my ministry has received the report; they're reviewing the report and analyzing it. We'll make the decision that is in the best interest of the people of Sudbury.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Minister of Research and Innovation. Minister, investing in a globally competitive life sciences sector in Ontario is a key part

of our government's plan to create the highly skilled jobs that are in demand in today's knowledge economy.

1140

Ontario's life sciences sector is currently the largest jurisdiction in Canada, with more than 50% of total Canadian life sciences economic activity. Some of the world's leading research centres, hospitals and clinics, such as the University of Toronto, the Ontario Cancer Institute, SickKids and Mount Sinai, are located right here in my riding of Trinity-Spadina.

Minister, can you please inform the House on the economic benefits of investing in life sciences, and how our government is fostering a world-renowned life sciences sector right here in Ontario?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina for that question. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to report that with 160,000 researchers and scientists, 300 pharmaceutical firms and 1,300 medical devices firms, our province of Ontario has emerged as a global leader in the life sciences sector in the world.

Since 2010, my ministry has made an investment in life sciences research, resulting in 1,000 new jobs and more than \$750 million of leveraged funds. In 2012, Ontario's life sciences sector generated more than \$38 billion in revenue and contributed about \$8 billion in export goods.

We will continue building Ontario up by investing in research and innovation and commercialization of research, which will put forward the foundation of economic development in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the minister for that answer. It's very reassuring to know that our government remains committed to investing in an innovative, globally competitive life sciences sector in Ontario. Quite honestly, it's one of the largest job creators in my riding.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of researchers across the province, Ontario has also become a global leader in stem cell research and regenerative medicine. Ontario currently ranks third in the world in terms of significant discoveries in stem cells.

My constituents in the riding of Trinity-Spadina have friends and family suffering from chronic diseases like Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and multiple sclerosis. I understand that stem cell research and regenerative medicine are allowing scientists to better understand the causes of these diseases and develop the technology needed to treat them.

Minister, can you please inform the members of this House how this funding will develop new treatments and therapies for people living with these and other degenerative diseases?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, stem cells were discovered in our province of Ontario by Till and McCulloch. Stem cell research is laying a pathway towards better therapies and the cures for chronic diseases.

Just recently, I was in the Ontario Institute for Regenerative Medicine, where I announced a \$25-million

investment by our government in support of research in treatments and therapies for chronic diseases such as multiple sclerosis, cancer and diabetes. This funding will support the institute in revolutionizing treatments and making Ontario a global leader in commercialization of stem cell-related products and services.

With advances in stem cell therapy, one day we could fix damaged cells in the heart, we will be able to restore vision and we will be able to activate the immune system to fight cancer. We will continue investing in research and innovation, which will be the foundation of our economic growth for tomorrow.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Maybe she'll answer me. In last year's estimates, the minister stated that SAMS would have a seamless rollout and that no one would know there was a change taking place. The transition has been anything but seamless.

Yesterday's report claims that it will be 19 months past the original date before the government will close the books on this project. The government will also spend an additional \$50 million on SAMS, all because of what the minister originally noted as a small glitch.

Minister, can you say with absolute certainty that this is the final time you will announce delays and cost overruns for this error-riddled system rollout?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I think that we should all be very clear that the decision to implement SAMS was not taken lightly. A new system was required because the old system introduced by the former government—SDMT, as it was known—was unreliable and unable to keep up with the needs of 21st-century service delivery. In fact, the Auditor General said that that technology was outdated, had serious integrity issues and did not have the ability to manage the rules that are part of Ontario's social assistance.

Not only that, the cost of introduction of that system, in 2015 dollars, was \$745 million when it was procured in 2001. In other words, it cost some \$451 million more than the total amount for the introduction of SAMS.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is your answer? Shameful.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's never too late to get a warning.

Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's so interesting that whenever anything goes wrong with this government, they blame somebody else for it.

Under this minister, the cost of SAMS' implementation has skyrocketed to nearly \$300 million. Individuals and families have received erroneous cheques, leaving some unable to afford rent or food. Municipalities and service providers have incurred millions of dollars of cost overruns. There's no question that the SAMS implementation has been a failure.

Speaker, in March the minister said that she was truly sorry for the problems with SAMS, but yesterday's transition report shows no contrition. It's nothing but a pat on the back. What does she have to say today to the individuals whose services will have to be cut in order to pay for her government's mismanagement?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly happy to talk about some of the advantages of the new system, because apparently this is being totally overlooked. We have a modern, reliable system. It is going to do exactly what we need to do. It is stabilized. It allows for social assistance rate increases—of course, our government is actually increasing social assistance—to be processed in some two or three days, whereas the old SDMT system took months for clients' monthly benefits to reflect the change.

SAMS will now allow clients to send and receive information through a new easy-to-use online portal. SAMS will also enable the province-wide implementation of the reloadable payment card program in the next year, something that has been piloted by the city of Toronto. This would have been completely impossible with the old system. This will assist clients to access their benefit funds more conveniently.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Today I'd like to introduce two visitors from my riding of Niagara Falls. Dave Evans is a firefighter who is here with us today. Equally important is his son Ben, who came all the way from Quebec to visit his dad and see Queen's Park. Welcome, and I hope you have a great day.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on a motion, as amended, for allocation of time on Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 21, Mr. Leal moved government notice of motion number 41.

On October 22, the following amendment by Mr. Smith was declared carried:

"That the paragraph starting 'That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill' be struck out and replaced with:

"That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015'; and

"That the third bullet be struck out and replaced with:

"—That following the deadline, the Clerk of the Committee provide the members of the subcommittee with a list of requests to appear; and

"—That the members of the subcommittee prioritize and return the list by 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 29, 2015; and

"—That the Clerk of the Committee schedule witnesses from these prioritized lists."

All those in favour of Mr. Leal's motion, as amended, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Fraser, John	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hoggart, Ann	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Kiwalla, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daine
Dhillon, Vic	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Nicholls, Rick
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	Hatfield, Percy	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Hillier, Randy	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Tabuns, Peter
Clark, Steve	Jones, Sylvia	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	MacLaren, Jack	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
French, Jennifer K.	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
Gates, Wayne	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 36.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion, as amended, carried.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

RICHARD PIGEAU

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt on a point of order.

Mme France Gélinas: I believe we have unanimous consent to rise for a minute of silence for Mr. Richard Pigeau, who was a member of Sudbury Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union, Local 598, who died at Glencore's Nickel Rim mine in my riding on Tuesday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nickel Belt is seeking unanimous consent to rise for a moment of silence in memoriam for the miner killed in the riding of Nickel Belt. Do we agree? Agreed.

May I ask all members of this place to stand to observe a moment of silence for the dead miner.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Our thoughts and prayers to the family. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Steven Del Duca: We are joined here today in the gallery by some individuals who work very closely with the Ministry of Transportation as it relates to road and highway safety. I want to introduce Louise Logan, president and CEO of Parachute; Scott Watson, manager of government and stakeholder relations at Parachute; Val Smith, director of solutions at Parachute; Sunitha Ravi Kumar, coordinator of knowledge translation at Parachute; Zac Stevenson, public affairs adviser from State Farm; and Kailey Fisher, a public affairs specialist from State Farm.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Liberal government's failed energy policies have not only done egregious damage to ratepayers and families in this province, they are also hurting local distribution companies. In the LDCs' own words, they are "stuck between a rock and a hard place." When families have to make the choice between heating and eating, they're stuck between a rock and a hard place, too. That happened to a family in the Niagara region, and as a consequence, Niagara Peninsula Energy reluctantly disconnected their electricity.

In the words of Brian Wilkie, president and CEO of NPE, "The size of the bills are just getting too high and it's just getting worse. Every couple of months there is another 3% or 4% increase. I have businesses coming to me saying they just can't stay in business with some of these rates."

On a bill of about \$200 a month, the LDCs are only collecting about \$35 to \$40. The rest is mostly made up of provincial and other charges.

This is a story that is being repeated over and over and over again here in Ontario, and the worst is yet to come. Hydro prices are increasing again on November 1, and winter is just around the corner.

How many more people will be in the same situation as a result of not being able to pay their bills this winter? How many more stories just like this one will we have to hear before this Liberal government will recognize that their policies are an abject failure and they must change?

OJIBWAY PRAIRIE COMPLEX

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: As many in this chamber know, my riding of Windsor West is extraordinarily gifted, both with its active citizens and pristine nature reserves. The two go hand in hand.

An engaged group in my community, known as Save Ojibway, is currently working to protect the Ojibway Prairie Complex, an ecosystem of global significance that runs through my riding. I would like to thank Save Ojibway, their leaders, volunteers and supporters for taking on this important initiative.

Ojibway Prairie is a five-park natural heritage system totalling 350 hectares. The sites have over 100,000 visitors per year, boast one of the top butterfly counts in North America, and attract enough bird species to please even the most accomplished birdwatchers.

The sustainability of this national treasure is threatened by a proposed big box development. Speaker, this story is all too familiar to us. This week, my colleague Percy Hatfield and I have presented petitions signed by thousands of area residents calling for the protection of Ojibway Prairie Complex. The stakes are enormous, the consequences dire. We won't get a second chance to save Ojibway Prairie.

It was said that the chances of Save Ojibway successfully protecting the Ojibway Prairie are the same as for a turtle safely crossing the road. Well, Speaker, turtles do cross the road, and the members of my community want this government to help this turtle cross the road and Ojibway Shores to be saved.

ANNIVERSARY OF SHOOTINGS IN OTTAWA

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very honoured today to stand and speak about last year's shooting on Parliament Hill. At the time, I was a member of Parliament, representing the riding of Sudbury. I, like the leader of the official opposition, experienced that traumatic day, but I think if we look back, Mr. Speaker, I want to do a few things first.

The first thing, of course, is to recognize Corporal Cirillo. I know that was done today quite eloquently by the Premier, the leader of the third party and the leader of the official opposition.

But I think it's also important to recognize a few other individuals: the former Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Vickers, who was considered a hero that day. I'd also like to acknowledge Constable Gervais for probably one of the bravest things I've ever seen. When the bullets were flying, he ran through the caucus doors, told us to get down, turned around and held the doors—and a bullet lodged in that door. He put his life on the line for us, and that is something that I know I am truly grateful for and I know many MPs are always grateful for. That parliamentary crew of security that day did an outstanding job, and I want to acknowledge them and thank them for that.

I think it's important for us here to also thank our security staff who keep us safe each and every day, those

folks who are out there keeping us safe. It's important as well.

I'd also like to acknowledge a former member of Parliament, Ryan Cleary. He and I had a moment when we both thought we were going to die. It was kind of an unusual experience, and it's always something he and I talk about.

Of course, Mr. Speaker—I know my time is running out—we need to thank our families, because while many of us were taken out of harm's way, we couldn't reach out to let them know we were safe. As politicians, our families are always worried about us, and I think we need to acknowledge that the families had a very difficult time that day as well. I'd just like to thank all of our families for allowing us to do what we do.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and recognize Local Government Week. It's an opportunity to raise awareness about the role and importance of municipal governments.

Across Ontario, municipalities are holding events and activities to raise awareness about how municipal government works, particularly among students. Municipalities are holding council meetings in schools and offering tours of municipal offices, as well as holding essay contests and career fairs.

I want to commend all the municipalities of Ontario both for their efforts to raise awareness this week and for the work they do for the people of their communities every day.

We know how important the services that local governments deliver are, and they do it with limited resources. Whether it's roads, water, waste disposal or assistance to people in need, municipalities provide services that people depend on every day.

We understand that they are a mature level of government and are working hard through planning and economic development to ensure a bright future for their communities. And municipalities can depend on us to be there for them. Many municipalities have told us that they need a real partner who is willing to listen to them, and we are committed to both listening and to working with them. We understand the challenges they face and that they are the experts on local government in their communities, and we value their input.

Again, as we celebrate Local Government Week, I'm pleased to commend all our municipal governments on behalf of the PC caucus and recognize them for all their hard work.

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TENDER FRUIT INDUSTRY

Mr. Wayne Gates: On Wednesday, October 14, I was pleased to attend a grant announcement at Tregunno Fruit Farms in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers and the Friends of the Greenbelt Founda-

tion announced \$400,000 to support our local tender-fruit growers and the Niagara region as a whole. These funds will be used to launch a pilot project to plant tender fruit tree varieties, such as peaches and pears, to provide a financial boost to greenbelt growers and strengthen this key economic sector.

I'd like to applaud the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation for their continued work in ensuring nearly two million acres of land are preserved.

I'd also like to recognize the Ontario Tender Fruit Growers. The work they do plays a significant role in Ontario's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the Niagara Peninsula is Ontario's largest and most important fruit-growing area, and it's wonderful to see this pilot project being established in order to enhance this very significant part of Niagara's own local economy.

Now we need to ensure that these wonderful locally grown tender fruits are being sold locally. I am going to be encouraging the grocery stores in my riding and across Ontario to give prime shelf space to locally grown fruits. Putting these locally grown fruits up front means people eat fresher, better-tasting, healthier food, as we support our farmers across Ontario.

By growing locally, selling locally and eating locally, we will help strengthen not just Niagara's economy by creating more jobs, but the entire province's economy.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I rise today to mark Community Health and Wellbeing Week, which is being celebrated across Ontario. During this week, Ontario's 109 community health centres, community-governed family health teams and nurse practitioner-led clinics are holding special events across the province, and are co-ordinated by the Association of Ontario Health Centres.

This week's theme is "Community Health and Well-being: Shift the Conversation"—creating a new kind of dialogue about health and health care that is all about addressing all of the factors in people's lives that affect their health and well-being. One of those factors is the kind of community where you live. Research tells us that when you have the opportunity to live in a caring and connected community that makes you feel valued and accepted and that makes you feel like you belong, then you are more likely to be healthy. This is why during this week, participating centres are raising awareness about community vitality and sense of belonging as critically important determinants of health. The need to support this forms a key principle in a community health centre model to promote health and well-being.

In my own riding of Cambridge, Langs Community Health Centre established a great program called Connectivity. Working with local police, the goal was to mobilize health and social services organizations to address risk factors and reduce the incidence of crime. This program has been a wonderful success in promoting

community vitality, and it has now spread to Kitchener and Guelph.

I thank all those who work in community health centres across Ontario and am proud to recognize the hard work they do and their focus on community vitality and building a sense of belonging.

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Ms. Laurie Scott: This week is Small Business Week, and we get to pay tribute to the small businesses that form the bedrock of our Canadian economy. In Ontario, nearly 98% of businesses are small businesses employing less than a hundred people.

This year, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce would like to help showcase the pivotal role that the Ontario chamber network plays in making Small Business Week one of the most anticipated celebrations. I know that throughout my areas of Kawartha Lakes, Haliburton, Durham and Peterborough, seminars, open houses and awards ceremonies have taken place all week and will continue.

As we celebrate Small Business Week, it is important to recognize the challenges that they face, and what we can do to help them prosper.

In a recent survey by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 44% of businesses said that they would reduce their payroll or hire fewer employees because of the ORPP. The government has yet to provide any assurance to businesses that the ORPP won't kill jobs and hurt competitiveness.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce has consistently raised alarm bells about how rising electricity prices will impact the health of our economy. The Liberal sale of Hydro One will affect small business owners. There are no assurances that hydro rates won't skyrocket again because of the exorbitant salaries, severances and gold-plated pensions.

The CFIB estimates that the burden of red tape costs Canadian businesses \$30 billion each year in compliance alone.

The government needs to listen to small businesses, get its fiscal house in order—and once again become the best place in the world to invest and to support small businesses.

FOODSHARE TORONTO

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As the member for Davenport, I'm delighted to rise and congratulate FoodShare Toronto, a wonderful organization in my riding, on its 30th anniversary today. It was with great pleasure that I attended their celebratory breakfast this morning.

FoodShare is a not-for-profit organization that works with communities and schools to deliver healthy food and food education. Since 1985, FoodShare has pioneered innovative programs, impacted what kids eat in school and improved the way people eat and grow food. I'm proud of the work FoodShare is doing to improve

food security for children and families in my riding, in our city and, really, across the whole province.

FoodShare continues to be an invaluable advocate and provider of affordable and accessible food by helping people living in low-income communities to save money and eat healthier by improving their access to affordable vegetables and fruit.

The government of Ontario recognizes how FoodShare Toronto makes a difference. Last month, I had the honour of hosting the Honourable Deb Matthews, Ontario's minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, to announce the Ontario government's commitment of up to \$112,000 to support FoodShare's programs through the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

I'm proud to have this wonderful organization in my riding of Davenport. There is no better reward than helping those who are less fortunate. I'm pleased to congratulate them. Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped build this organization from the ground up, and a special thank you to Executive Director Debbie Field for all her work, her vision, and seeing FoodShare enter its 30th year. Congratulations.

IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about a special event that took place in Halton last week. Hundreds of people gathered in a local high school gym to watch close to 40 people take their oath of citizenship.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the honour of attending several citizenship ceremonies over the years, and I find each one to be just as moving as the first. It's energizing and inspiring to see so many people from so many different countries, backgrounds and histories taking an oath that will start them on their Canadian journey. There wasn't a dry eye in the house, and the young people on hand were clearly moved and energized by the ceremony.

As an immigrant myself, I know how much they have all sacrificed and how hard they have all worked to get to that day. These individuals wanted a new and better life in Canada. They chose a place where human rights are protected, where democracy is valued and where we can all pursue our dreams. This is a place where diversity isn't just accepted; it is celebrated. It is that diversity that makes us all strong.

We are a collection of different histories, backgrounds and personal stories, yet we all share many core values and the belief that no matter where we come from, we can all share in this extraordinary dream that is Canada.

Congratulations and welcome to all new citizens. I wish them the best as they embark on this new chapter in their lives.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre on a point of order.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, I have some guests with us here today from our student communities across

Ontario. These are leaders of student organizations from across the province who helped to craft the private member's bill we'll be debating later today. I beg your indulgence, if I could introduce them to you.

We have with us, from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, Sean Madden, their executive director; Lindsee Perkins, vice-president of OUSA and board representative from Western University; Chris Fernlund, vice-president of OUSA and board representative from Trent Durham; Armin Escher, who is an OUSA staff person.

We have a number of members from the College Student Alliance. We have Jeff Scherer, president of the College Student Alliance; Ciara Byrne; Ted Bartlett; Olivia Anderson from Fleming College; Champagne Thomson from Fleming College; Jennifer Newton from Fleming College; Rob Williams from Fleming College; and Janice Asimiwe as well.

We also have somebody who's not a student but has been a student in the past and shaped my student experience: my father, Donald Baker.

Thank you all so much for coming. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests.

I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill, without amendment:

Bill 9, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 9, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated June 2, 2015, the bill is ordered for third reading.

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MOTIONS

ESTIMATES

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice with respect to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 60 and the order of the House dated October 7, 2015, the Standing Committee on Estimates consider the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on October 27, 2015; and

That the Standing Committee on Estimates consider the remaining 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Energy on October 28, 2015. Upon completion of consideration of the remaining 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Energy, the committee shall resume the consideration of the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Del Duca moves that, notwithstanding standing order 60 and the order of the House dated October 7, 2015, the Standing Committee on Estimates consider the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on October 27, 2015; and

That the Standing Committee on Estimates consider the remaining 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Energy on October 28, 2015. Upon completion of consideration of the remaining 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Energy, the committee shall resume consideration of the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ROAD SAFETY

Hon. Steven Del Duca: For the past 14 years, Ontario's roads have been consistently ranked either first or second in road safety across North America. Ontario is recognized as a world-class leader in road safety because of our tough laws, our strong enforcement and the dedicated work of our many road safety partners.

We have many strong road safety partners working side by side with government, like Parachute Canada. Earlier today I did recognize that we have a number of visitors from Parachute here with us in the gallery. These organizations work closely with us and we collectively have a mission to prevent injuries and save lives. This week is Parachute's National Teen Driver Safety Week, designed to stop the clock on unnecessary teen deaths on the road by raising awareness and by seeking solutions.

The Ministry of Transportation has a valued relationship with Parachute. Staff joined them at the official launch of National Teen Driver Safety Week at Sunnybrook hospital along with our other road safety partners from Toronto police, the CAA and a number of local high schools. Their campaign this year, known as "Best

Friends Forever—Practice Safe Text,” asks teens to be a best friend and encourages peers to wait until they arrive at their destination before texting back.

Teen driver safety is an important issue. Nationally, young people represent about one quarter of all road-related injuries and fatalities, but they comprise less than 15% of all licensed drivers. It's important in Ontario because if current trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may exceed those from drinking and driving in the near future. Research also indicates that a driver who uses a cellphone is four times more likely to be involved in a crash, and that teen drivers are a big part of that statistic with about half admitting to texting while driving.

This year, on September 1, the Ontario government got a whole lot tougher with drivers who still aren't getting the message on distracted driving by escalating penalties for novice drivers convicted of distracted driving, increasing the fine to \$490, and applying three demerit points upon conviction. Teenagers and all drivers need to remember to keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road, and not to text or to be on their phone while driving. Keeping our roads safe for everyone—for teens, for novice or experienced drivers, passengers, cyclists and pedestrians—is a top priority for this government.

The new distracted driving measures that I mentioned are part of the Making Ontario's Roads Safer legislation. This was legislation that was designed and implemented to reduce collisions, injuries and fatalities across Ontario, while improving the safety of all road users. Making Ontario's Roads Safer also includes improved measures to address drivers who repeatedly drink and drive by requiring them to complete intensive alcohol education, treatment and monitoring programs. Soon we will be applying alcohol-impaired sanctions to drivers who are drug-impaired because recent statistics show that over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system.

We know that these measures will have an impact on teenage drivers in particular. Teenage drivers are more likely to be found driving while affected by drugs, especially cannabis, than by alcohol. Nevertheless, as of May 31, 2015, there were 2,014 convictions issued to drivers 21 years of age and under for violating their zero blood-alcohol concentration requirements, which had taken effect in August 2010.

We were one of the first to take action on distracted driving in 2009 by banning the use of hand-held devices, and we're going to continue to take action today and in the future. I certainly look forward to sharing more about how our government will work with all of our road safety partners to raise awareness and change behaviour relating to distracted driving or impaired driving, whether drug or alcohol, in the coming months.

We recognize that everyone, from the most vulnerable to the most seasoned, needs to feel safe and protected on our roads and highways because unsafe drivers and

vehicles have no place on Ontario's roads. The people of Ontario and our teenage and young drivers deserve no less. We are a North American leader in road safety, and we are committed to keeping it that way.

I stand here today to mark Parachute's National Teen Driver Safety Week, and I say to all teen drivers: Be a good best friend and don't let your friends drive distracted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

Mr. Michael Harris: Any time we can spend addressing driver safety is time well spent as far as I'm concerned. This week we actually have not one, but two reasons to discuss the importance of safety on Ontario roads, as we recognize both National Teen Driver Safety Week, as the minister noted, and also School Bus Safety Week.

I think it's important to recognize that when we're talking about safety of any specific segment of our motorist population, we are really speaking about the safety of all drivers. The more we can do to spread awareness and prevent accidents for one group, the more we can do to prevent accidents for all of us.

To be clear, safety on our roads is a shared responsibility. That's why, as we mark National Teen Driver Safety Week, I encourage all to join with our road safety partners at Parachute Canada in spreading the awareness message that underlines this designated week across the province. Join the social media messages, #NTDSW or #BFF, aimed at stopping the clock on unnecessary teen deaths on the road by raising awareness. Talk to your #BFF about texting while driving and encourage them to #PracticeSafeText—just wait until you're out of the car or pulled off to the side of the road or parked before you do it.

It's a sad and sobering thought that while young people only make up 13% of licensed drivers, they account for approximately one quarter of all road-related injuries and fatalities, often preventable injuries and deaths. I think we can all recognize that faced with those numbers, there is more to be done, more we can do as a society, as MPPs in our communities, to raise awareness and talk about the root causes that inflate teen accident ratio numbers so far out of proportion.

Certainly, the distracted driving legislation we passed this year takes a step towards addressing these numbers, but legislation is only part of the picture. We must all play a part for the concerted effort required to ensure teen driver safety, both this week and for the years to come.

I also want to take the opportunity to ask my colleagues to join me in showing support for our professional school bus drivers across the province today in recognition of School Bus Driver Appreciation week, a week when we should all “get on the bus” and reinforce the importance of student transportation and school bus safety.

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Today, we have in excess of 825,000 children transported to and from school every day using some 18,000

safe and reliable yellow school buses, travelling two million kilometres and providing 300 million safe rides during the year. That's a whole lot of safety, Speaker, and the humble bus drivers delivering that safety deserve our recognition and our respect, both this week and throughout the school year.

On behalf of all of us here and those across the province, I'd like to offer our thanks to those who ensure the safety of Ontario's children each and every day of the school year. Thank you. And thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to recognize their efforts and those creating awareness and promoting safety during National Teen Driver Safety Week.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in response to the statement of the Minister of Transportation this afternoon.

National Teen Driver Safety Week is one of those times that your professional life comes very close to your personal life. As many of you know, I have a teen daughter, Jacqueline. She's 18. As you can all imagine, her safety is our top priority. She is one of those young drivers we are talking about today. This week is designed to stop the clock on unnecessary teen deaths on our roads by raising awareness and seeking solutions.

For me, that means working with my daughter to make sure she knows what not to do when she is driving. I also want to work with her to make sure that she passes that message along to her friends and other family members.

There's another aspect to making sure that teen drivers are safe: driving schools. In driving schools, teens learn not just how to drive but how to drive safely for themselves and for everyone else around them. They learn to respect the machine they are in and to watch out for warning signs from other drivers. Driver school is great for learning to be a safe driver. It's also great for reducing auto insurance rates, and we know how much that costs parents in the province of Ontario.

Like I said, this is an issue that is very close to home for me. I would like to encourage all of you to do the same. Go out and talk to a teen you know. Maybe it's your own child, your niece or your nephew. Maybe it's a neighbour's child or a friend's child. Whoever it is, make sure you take the opportunity this week to talk to them about being safe drivers. Do it not just for them but for all their friends and family. Do it because car accidents don't just affect people who are in them; they affect everyone who has loved ones.

Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges facing young drivers today is, of course, distracted driving. As I mentioned a few days ago in this House, distracted driving is becoming the number one cause of accidents in this country and this province.

I also had the pleasure of meeting with some folks from CAA Niagara a few days ago, and they stressed this issue with me as well.

I know that, for me, texting and driving wouldn't work because I can barely text and stand up at the same time, but for my kids it's a different story. They live with their phones in their hands, and we need to be very strong in

telling them about the dangers of texting and driving. That is why I was very happy to see new penalties around distracted driving being brought in and why I believe we need to continue to address this issue every year.

Teen driver safety is a huge issue not just here in Ontario but right across the country. Right now, as we've heard before, our young people make up 13% of licensed drivers in this country. Even though they only make up 13% of licensed drivers, they account—think about this—for 25% of all road-related injuries and, unfortunately, fatalities.

Obviously that's just awful to hear, that 25% of the time you hear about an accident on the news, it's going to be one of our young people being affected. One of our young people and their entire family is being affected in 25% of the accidents that result in injuries and fatalities. I believe, like a lot of other people, we can prevent that. We can. Quite frankly, we must take the time, the energy and the effort that is required to put a stop to that.

There is one very simple way that we can help prevent those injuries and deaths. All it takes sometimes is a conversation. I've already said it once, but I wanted to say it again: Take the time this week to get out there and talk to young people in your life about the dangers of distracted driving, the dangers of drunk driving and the dangers of being behind the wheel in general. Take the time to encourage them to spread that message to their friends and beyond.

Again, I'd like to thank the minister for his comments on this very important issue, teen driving safety, and thank Parachute Canada.

Please, everyone, get out there and make this week count. It's all about educating our children.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank very much the dental practice of Lisa Bentley in Mississauga for having submitted it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking

water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it with page Sebastian.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition here from the great people of the Kenora–Rainy River riding, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas government cuts have a direct impact on patient care and front-line workers;

“Whereas hospital base operating budgets have been frozen for four years in a row and hospital global funding increases have been set below the rate of inflation since 2008, meaning that hospital budgets have been cut in real dollar terms ... for eight years in a row;

“Whereas Ontario government funding figures show that home care funding per client is less today than it was in 2002;

“Whereas Ontario hospital funding is the lowest in Canada;

“Whereas Ontario ranks eighth out of 10 provinces in hospital funding as a percentage of provincial GDP; and

“Whereas the government has actually refused to acknowledge that service cuts are happening;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately stop cuts and freezes to hospital budgets;

“To immediately cease the laying off of nurses and other front-line workers; and

“To fund hospitals adequately to ensure highest quality patient care across the province.”

I wholeheartedly support this and will give this to the page to deliver to the table.

PROTECTION DE L’ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Arthur Potts: J’ai une pétition adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

“Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à

travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

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“Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

“Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

“Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

“Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

I agree with this petition—what I can remember of it—and I sign it and leave with page Faith.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mrs. Gila Martow: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario families and businesses have seen their hydro costs more than triple under the Liberal government since 2003;

“Whereas the Liberal government’s unaffordable Green Energy Act, the \$2 billion wasted on the smart meter program and the \$1.1 billion wasted on the cancelled gas plants will translate into a further 42% increase in hydro bills over five years;

“Whereas the Auditor General revealed that the Liberal government has collected approximately \$50 billion over the last decade through a global adjustment tax on hydro bills largely used to subsidize exorbitant green energy contracts;

“Whereas the Liberal government has allowed peak hydro rates to increase by 15% on May 1;

“Whereas the Liberal government’s elimination of the clean energy benefit will mean an average increase in hydro bills of \$137 per year;

“Whereas the Liberal government’s planned sale of a majority share of Hydro One will mean higher hydro bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To call on the Liberal government to protect Ontario families and businesses from further hydro increases by applying all proceeds from the sale of Hydro One to the \$27-billion electricity debt and imposing a moratorium on any new industrial wind and solar projects.”

I’m happy to affix my signature and give it to page Michael.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Minister of Transportation, government of Ontario:

“Whereas the new Union-Pearson Express line continues to negatively impact residents along the corridor with excessive noise and vibration and bells, because:

“(1) Intermittent bells announcing the arrival and departure of trains at Bloor Station are causing significant stress and sleep disruption; and

“(2) There is concern that property values will decrease;

“We, the undersigned impacted residents of Toronto, Ontario, call upon the provincial government to:

“—work with federal counterparts to eliminate the use of train bells in the vicinity of Glen Lake Condominiums, located at 2495 Dundas Street West; and

“—implement a noise-mitigation plan along the UPX corridor, if construction continues.”

This is just one condominium’s worth—I absolutely agree. I’m going to give it to Cameron to be delivered to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children.

“Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues; and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario lung health action plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Julia.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I support this petition. I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Sebastian to deliver.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry’s goal of increasing employment and the provincial government’s poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government's plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit."

We should be ashamed of how we treat those on ODSP. I definitely am going to sign this. I'm going to give it to Michael to be delivered to the table. Thank you, Michael.

Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition, am affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Michael.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This is such an important petition, it's worth repeating here:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I support this petition, and will give this to Cameron to deliver to the table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

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"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY EXCELLENCE ACT (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL REPORT), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES VOIES DE L'EXCELLENCE AU NIVEAU POSTSECONDAIRE (RAPPORT SUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE)

Mr. Baker moved second reading of the following bill: Bill 127, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005 to require the Council to collect and publish information in respect of certain educational institutions / Projet de loi 127, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2005 sur le Conseil ontarien de la qualité de l'enseignement supérieur pour exiger que le Conseil recueille et publie des renseignements concernant certains établissements d'enseignement.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand in the House today to speak about private member's Bill 127, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005.

Before I speak to the bill, I'd just like to take a moment to recognize some of the people in the audience who are with us today and the people who have made this bill possible. The first people I'd like to acknowledge are the folks who are with us here in the east members' gallery, student leaders from across Ontario who have made this bill possible. They advised on the bill, they were the inspiration for the bill, the students that they represent were the inspiration for the bill, and I thank you very much for all that you've done. All the students from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the College Student Alliance, the Canadian Federation of Students and the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance: I thank you.

I would also like to thank the many students from across Ontario and the other stakeholders who provided advice on this bill but could not be with us today.

Speaker, as you know, to put together a bill like this, especially as a private member, you need a fantastic team. I've had the fortune of having a fantastic team since being elected to the Legislature, so I'd like to thank the staff who've worked on this. Sinéad Anderson, my

EA; Aashish Oberoi, my LA; Theresa Lubowitz, Domenic Bitondo and Aaron Van Tassel, I thank you.

I'd also like to thank my fellow members of caucus and MPPs from all parties who advised, who have asked questions, who've given suggestions for the bill, and staff. You all know who you are, and I thank you so much. We wouldn't be here without you.

Speaker, once in a while when I rise in the House I refer back to my family and especially to my grandparents, whom I was always very close to. With your indulgence, I'd like to tell a brief story about my family again.

As many of you know, my grandparents on my mom's side were immigrants to Canada. They were fiercely proud of their ancestral heritage, but they were also amongst the proudest Canadians I've ever known.

One of the proudest moments I remember from my grandfather and grandmother was the day my sister and I graduated from university. It stands out like it was yesterday. Later on, my sister and I decided to pursue graduate studies. By then, my grandfather had unfortunately passed, but my grandmother was with us. She was over 90 years old. She was in her early 90s and in frail health, and very rarely could she leave the house; very rarely would she travel. She certainly wouldn't fly anywhere. Even long drives were a challenge.

When my sister and I graduated from our graduate studies—we were studying far away—my grandmother not only took that long car ride, she not only got on a plane to travel to where we were graduating, but she actually went out and got a passport so that she could visit us. It was a passport she would only use that one time.

I think that reflects how proud my grandmother was. She was proud because of the importance of post-secondary education to our lives. She was proud of the work that we had done, of course, but she was also proud of the future that lay before us, I think. I think she is not an exception. She is the norm. Families—grandparents, parents, sisters, brothers—are all proud, and students are proud, of the work they are doing and of students, particularly when they graduate, and the future ahead of them.

It was not so long ago that I was a student. After being a student, I pursued a career in business, and upon graduating from my graduate studies I pursued a career in management consulting, where I was involved in recruiting students from post-secondary. During that time I also had a chance to be a part-time faculty member at York University. In these roles I have touched post-secondary education from multiple perspectives: as a student, as a faculty member and a business person.

I believe that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are some of the best in the world. We have world-class institutions. They produce incredibly talented students, and I'm proud of their success, and I'm frankly proud of the work our government has done to support both students and post-secondary excellence. Our institutions are indeed some of the best in the world.

In part because of my experience as a student, as a faculty member and as a business person, and in part because those institutions are so strong, I also believe that the choice that students make about their post-secondary program, and the institution at which they will study, is one of the most important and pivotal decisions that people make in their lives. It is one of the most significant financial investments students and families make in their lives, and the choice of post-secondary program of study is pivotal in shaping a student's future prospects and opportunities. The choice of post-secondary study shapes the path we follow in our careers, and it shapes the path we follow for the rest of our lives.

Many students rightly have high expectations with regard to their experience in college or university, and what employment or further academic opportunities they will be able to pursue post-graduation. In some cases, those expectations are met and even exceeded. But some students, however, pursue a post-secondary degree and then learn about aspects of the post-secondary experience that they would have benefited from knowing about in advance.

Sometimes they discover that there are unexpected costs related to their post-secondary studies, that the student experience is meaningfully different than what they expected that it would be, and very commonly—and I think we all know examples of students in this situation—students struggle to find a job or pursue a career in their chosen field of study post-graduation. Those graduates then either pursue a career in a different field or pursue additional post-secondary studies that support their aspirations post-graduation. I know we can think of examples of people who we've met or constituents who we've met in that situation.

I even experienced this myself. When I graduated as a student from my undergraduate program, I struggled to find a job in my chosen field. As a professor, as a business person and now as an MPP, I have spoken with a lot of young people who were in that same position, and many of them have said that if they had known when applying what they know today as students and as graduates, they might have pursued a different field of study, not because the quality of that education wasn't strong—they received a strong education—but because the program they chose didn't prepare them for their specific career path that they wanted to pursue, for the dreams that they wanted to pursue.

That is why I believe it is so important that students and families are able to access the information that they need to make an informed decision about which post-secondary institution to attend and which post-secondary program to pursue. The private member's bill that I have introduced is meant to help students and families make those informed decisions.

If passed, Bill 127 would task the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario with the collection of information and creation of an online resource that would help students make more informed choices as they decide on which university or college to attend and which program

of study to pursue. The online resource would do this by providing information relevant to students about each post-secondary program in Ontario, in an easily accessible, consistent and simple manner.

In developing this bill I have consulted broadly with students, of course, with the folks who are here today, with guidance counsellors, with colleges, with universities, with faculty and with the business community, and everyone agrees that providing relevant and up-to-date information to students is important.

What emerged from this process was an understanding for me that students and their families wanted more information on three main topics when it came to post-secondary education. The first questions centre around access to post-secondary education: What does it take to get into an institution or particular program of study? Prospective students wanted to know things like, "How much does it cost for me to go to that particular program? What ancillary fees might I encounter when I get there? What are the costs of the educational resources that I'm going to need when I get there?" These are things that can often be a surprise or unexpected.

1400

This bill would require that HEQCO provide this information around access to post-secondary, that it provide information about what the admission requirements are, academics, what grades a student needs to get in. What costs are they going to encounter: tuition fees, ancillary fees, educational fees? What government-funded student aid is available for that particular program? What are the class sizes, and what are the demographics of that particular institution? These are the kinds of things that people want to know as they're applying and thinking about what it takes to access an institution and a program.

Secondly, students have questions about what it is really like to be a student at a prospective school—you don't really know until you go—and are interested not only in the lived experience from the perspective of current students but also from a graduate perspective.

This bill will require that HEQCO share with students what they can expect from their student experience and how current students and graduates of the program of study they're thinking of rate that experience. It should include things like teaching quality, library resources, campus accessibility, academic and career support services, health services, mental health services, co-op work programs, extracurricular programs, facilities and residences etc.—the kinds of things that make up the student experience.

The third category: There was a desire from students and families for more information about what job or career path they could expect when they graduate. Questions I heard from students were things like: "What do students do after they graduate from that particular program? How much income can I expect to have? How much debt can I expect to have? Will I be able to pay my debt back when I graduate?" They were concerned about having information to make a long-term investment decision about their education.

This bill would require that HEQCO share with students things like the employment or educational status of graduates from a particular program: things like the location of employment and the industry or sector of employment they're working in. What are they doing after they graduate? The full-time and part-time status of employment: Are people employed full-time or part-time? And what, if any, further academic studies are they pursuing as well, because that's a path that many students consider after graduating. What is the average annual compensation of students from that program? What government-issued student debt do they hold when they graduate? What percentage of grads have defaulted on loans after a certain amount of time has elapsed after graduation? How satisfied are employers with graduates?

The bill would address the gaps that students have talked about and create a resource to help students navigate the range of choices before them.

There is a significant amount of information collected about post-secondary institutions in Ontario. Some of that information that students and families have said they need is either not gathered, or when it is gathered, it's not presented in an easy way for students to access or it's not comparable or it doesn't include colleges and universities. This is meant to help students make those choices. The private member's bill tasks HEQCO with developing this resource. HEQCO is an arm's-length agency affiliated with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities that evaluates the post-secondary sector and provides recommendations to the minister. Their areas of focus include, among others, student satisfaction and postgraduate outcomes. That's why they've been selected, because we believe they have the expertise and the experience to be able to carry this out.

To ensure that we have flexibility to add information as it is deemed relevant, as more information about post-secondary education becomes available, and as we discover there are other things we want to know about post-secondary, the bill offers quite a lot of flexibility. It allows HEQCO to add additional information and metrics as they see fit.

Bill 127 has the endorsement of each of the province's major student groups: the Canadian Federation of Students, the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance, for which I am very grateful.

Speaker, I started today by speaking about my grandmother, and how she cherished the moment when my sister and I graduated, how proud she was and how she's an example of families and parents of students across our province. We have world-class post-secondary institutions in Ontario, and I believe that the choice a student makes about their program and institution of study is one of the most important decisions they will make in their life. It's one of the largest financial investments, and it shapes students' careers and the paths they take. That is why it is so important that they have the information they need to make an important decision.

Once implemented, I believe that this bill would lead to better decision-making by students and stronger

outcomes, and would give families of students even more to be proud of. I humbly ask all members for their support of this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am absolutely delighted to stand in the House today and speak in favour of this bill, put forward by my parliamentary assistant, Yvan Baker, who I have to say is doing an extraordinary job in his position as my parliamentary assistant at Treasury Board. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for that.

I also want to say that this bill is a terrific example of a great private member's bill. It is focused, it is achievable and it demonstrates a real commitment to making government work for people.

There's an old adage that knowledge is power. But where does that knowledge come from? It comes from data. Data is power. Making data publicly available has the potential to be very powerful indeed. In my time as Minister of Health, I saw first-hand how publicly reporting on quality metrics for hospitals has driven big change. This was, at the time, a difficult thing to do because nobody wants the public and their colleagues to know, for example, that their hospital is in the lowest quartile when it comes to hospital-acquired infections or standardized mortality rates. But by definition, a quarter of our hospitals are in the lowest quartile when it comes to those quality metrics.

The fact is that the Excellent Care for All Act, which mandates public reporting of quality indicators, is driving transformation. We know that when people have data on how they are doing, especially in comparison to others, they will make changes, because we all strive to do our best, and making data public helps us to do just that. If we see others doing better, we'll find out how they did better and we'll change the way we do our work. That kind of transparency drives innovation and improvement, and that's not only better for people, but it's better for the system too.

This bill, if passed, could do for the post-secondary sector what the Excellent Care for All Act did for the health care sector. It would require that the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario collect and publish information on admission requirements, program costs, class sizes and the employment status of graduates. That increases transparency and access to information for students and for post-secondary institutions. It will help students make better decisions and it will help institutions do a better job for their students. It ensures that young people and their families have the information they need to make one of the most important decisions that they will make for their future.

We know that a good education prepares young people for success in life. It gives them the tools and the skills to find that first job and leads them on the path to a prosperous future. We know that our world-class post-secondary institutions are crucial to our economy. We do have the most highly educated workforce in the OECD,

and we're proud of that. More than 66% of adults in Ontario complete post-secondary education—more than any other country in the OECD.

Businesses come here, businesses get established here and businesses grow here, because of the talent and dedication of our workforce. For example, Shopify, a Canadian e-commerce start-up and Ontario success story, recently announced that it is expanding and opening a large new office in Waterloo. They chose to expand in Waterloo because of—what they call—the “amazing talent pool” in the region, a talent pool that is filled with graduates who have received a top-tier education from universities in the region.

It's clear how important a person's decision about their education is, both for that person's future and for the future health of our economy. That's why we need to make sure that people have access to the information they need to make an informed decision.

I applaud the member from Etobicoke Centre, I applaud the bill that he has presented and I encourage all of us to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I, too, am very pleased to support Bill 127, and I thank the members opposite for co-operating with my schedule.

The bill that is being discussed here, in my view, addresses a couple of issues that I quite often see in my role as Minister of Education. One is the problem of students who are considering post-secondary education programs not truly understanding where that program leads as a career. For example, my background happens to be in math and computer science. If you look at the whole STEM area—that is science, technology, engineering and math—there are all sorts of opportunities there, but students don't actually understand what careers may follow from post-secondary courses in that area. So this bill would help that decision-making by collecting information about the employment of graduates after they complete the program, so that students can see the track between a particular program and the employment that it leads to. That's one of the things that the data that is collected would help with.

1410

Another problem that I often see is the problem of students not really understanding until it's too late what the prerequisites for various post-secondary programs are. Once again, this would be a repository of the information about: If you're interested in a particular career—this is going at it the other way around—if you actually do know what career you want to follow, what program do you need and what high school credits do you need to get there?

I think about a letter I got once from a young lady who wanted to become a veterinarian. She was complaining that she had to take math in high school, that it's compulsory for a few years. She couldn't see why on earth she would need mathematics to become a veterinarian. Well, it just so happens that my husband is a veterinarian,

so I actually knew this answer off the top of my head: (1) You're going to need math as a veterinarian, as you're figuring out drug dosages, so basic math actually matters; and (2) in order to get into the program, you first need university science, and to get into university science, you need math. So it all followed back if you tracked back.

The data on this website would allow students to do that, to see connections between high school credits and future post-secondary, so I totally support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 127, the Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act, 2015. As we've heard, this bill will require our post-secondary institutions, through the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, to collect and publish a list of information to help students make informed decisions when plotting out their course for higher learning.

There is no doubt that the goals of this bill will find support in all corners of this province and, in fact, in this Legislature, as we can all understand the importance when making significant life choices of having a clear view of all the comparables, rather than going in with blinders on. Further, the provision of data on all the variables, including costs, class size, graduation and work placement rates, can only help to improve our post-secondary institutions and, in turn, the students' post-secondary experience across the board. It will help students in their pursuit of the best educational experience, while it encourages institutions that may be lagging behind to pull up their socks to appeal to potential pupils seeking the best fit.

Frankly, Speaker, the call for openness and transparency reflected in this bill is in fact a breath of fresh air from a government that has oft spoken of these principles but failed to live up to them time and again. The more openness and transparency the better, and if this is where it starts, then let's get on with it.

I think of the post-secondary leaders in my community: the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier, the University of Guelph and, of course, Conestoga College, institutions that will only further benefit from the publication of data and stats in one easily accessible place, that highlights the good work being done in the region of Waterloo and neighbouring Guelph when it comes to higher learning. That work is well known, not only by word-of-mouth reputation from those who have experienced it, but also because, in fact, these institutions have long made public their key performance indicators, indicators we are all very proud of where I come from.

When it comes to employment rates, for instance, six months after graduation, 87.5% of University of Waterloo graduates find work, while it's 89.1% at Laurier, both over the provincial average. After two years, the rate jumps to 93% and 94%, respectively.

Digging deeper into the Waterloo numbers, prospective students will find that the school has a full-time

enrolment of 32,900, with 7,800 degrees granted in 2014. As well, I would be remiss if I did not also note here that those students and degree earners have helped Waterloo be recognized as the most innovative university in Canada according to the annual Maclean's survey, the 21st consecutive time that Waterloo has been ranked Canada's top university for innovation.

Over at Laurier, student satisfaction numbers, which are also called for in this bill, are equally impressive: 95% of students are satisfied with their decision to attend Laurier, and 84% of first-year students evaluate their Laurier experience as "good" or "excellent." I would also note that the Laurier team has once again won the School of the Year title for the undefeated sixth year in a row and the Academic Cup for a fourth consecutive year at the JDC Central competition.

Down the road, of course, in my community of Kitchener-Conestoga, at Conestoga College, the story just continues to get better. In fact, when it comes to employment, 94.2% of Conestoga College graduates, I being one of them, who entered the labour force found employment within six months, making their graduate employment rate the best of any publicly funded college in the province and well above the provincial average of 88.9%. Over the last 10 years, the employment rate average of Conestoga College graduates is an outstanding 93.1%.

Further data on Conestoga's key performance indicators reveal that 95.1% of employers were satisfied with the quality of the education of those graduates that attended the college; 83.2% of graduates were satisfied with the usefulness of their college education in achieving their goals after graduation; and almost 80% of students were satisfied with the overall quality of services, programming and resources available to them.

This is the type of information that weighs heavily on students and their families as they make those lifelong decisions on post-secondary education. It's the type of information for all post-secondary institutions that should be readily and easily accessible to the public to compare and contrast in a one-stop-shop format as they face those choices.

In addition to the importance of graduate and employment rate information, so too is information like cost and class size important to weigh in the balance and compare against other options.

The bottom line is that we want to ensure that when the students and their families make that choice, they make the best choice. So of course we're happy to support the member's private member's bill today.

I thank you for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a great pleasure for me to rise as MPP for London West, and also as post-secondary education critic for the Ontario NDP caucus, to speak to Bill 127, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, which would require the council to collect and publish information about post-secondary institutions.

Like other members have already said, I want to offer my thanks and congratulations to the member for Etobicoke Centre for taking the initiative to bring this bill forward and also for his interest in and commitment to the post-secondary sector.

From my perspective, post-secondary education is something that we don't talk about nearly enough in this chamber. We all recognize its critical importance to Ontario's economic prosperity, to the social and cultural well-being of our province, and we need to ensure that Ontario's post-secondary education is as good as it can be and that all students, regardless of where they live in this province or what kind of financial circumstances they come from, regardless of their age or other racial or ethnic backgrounds, have opportunities to participate in post-secondary education.

This bill will require all publicly assisted Ontario colleges and universities to submit data and information to HEQCO, which will be published on a central website that would be governed by HEQCO. I hope you noted my use of the term "publicly assisted" colleges and universities rather than "publicly funded." This is a nuanced change in language that the ministry itself has adopted. What this does is reflect the shift in post-secondary education funding that we have seen over the last decade or so, when public dollars are declining and private revenues are increasing in terms of sources of funding for our post-secondary institutions.

When I talk about private revenues, most of all I'm referring to tuition fees that are collected from students.

1420

For the first time in Ontario's history, this past year we saw public funding decline to the point where it now represents less than 50% of university revenues. Of course, what this means is that institutions have to look to collect more tuition dollars from students and also seek out more corporate donations.

Today, Ontario university students are paying the highest tuition fees in Canada. They have seen an increase of 248% over the past two decades. As a parent who has two children right now in post-secondary education, both of them living away from home, I can tell you that the costs are substantial to be able to afford post-secondary education.

When students and their families are looking at making this kind of very hefty investment, they deserve to have as much information as possible so that they can make good choices, choices that are right for them in terms of the future that they want to build for themselves. They deserve to have access to information about what kinds of programs are out there, how much these programs will cost and what kinds of outcomes they can expect if they participate in these programs. I'm talking about outcomes both in terms of the employment that, hopefully, they can go into after they graduate, but also in terms of the debt they can expect to incur.

I again congratulate the member on the support, the very enthusiastic support, that he has received from student organizations. I have talked to many of these

organizations and understand how much they appreciate the work that you did—that the member did—to consult with college students, with university undergraduate student organizations, and also with graduate students.

Certainly, in my conversations with representatives of these organizations, I heard strong support for the principle of helping students make more informed choices and the principle of improving accessibility by creating a single portal that would make information more easily and widely available.

I also consulted with other organizations in the post-secondary sector who also agreed that the intent of this bill was a good one and that it is always important to provide students with more and better information about their post-secondary choices.

I do have some concerns about the bill, however, based on the conversations that I had with stakeholders. The primary concern is the designation of HEQCO as the host agency for this information.

I want to be clear that as a former PI for several HEQCO research projects, I have the utmost respect for the quality of HEQCO's research and also for their understanding of post-secondary issues.

HEQCO exists by virtue of statute. It was created to advise the government on post-secondary education issues. Certainly, it has deep knowledge of the sector, which is incredibly valuable in its advisory role to the government. However, they do not have the in-house data expertise that would be required to build and maintain the information architecture that would be needed for a project of this scope. At least, to my knowledge, they don't have that kind of expertise.

As the member for Etobicoke Centre mentioned, most of the data that is identified in Bill 127 is already available, but it exists in various forms across many different platforms. This data includes NSSE data on student satisfaction, KPI data on student and employer satisfaction, as well as OSAP data on loans and defaults.

On the university side, the portal that is envisioned in this legislation refers to a lot of information that is already collected through the common university data online system, or CUDO, and that would include admission rates, entering averages, tuition and ancillary fees. I do want to say that information about ancillary fees is particularly important to students, because those fees can add significantly to the cost of post-secondary education.

CUDO also includes information about class size, number of instructional faculty, and full- and part-time enrolment. There is some data included already in CUDO on student satisfaction, and there is also data on employment status after six months and after two years.

This bill will consolidate all of this information that's already publicly available. However, keeping that information up to date is going to be a challenge. Making it available in an online format that would be searchable by institution, so that a student could just put in an institution they're interested in and they'd be able to pull the OSAP data, pull the KPI data and pull from these other

different data sources—that would be a massive undertaking, and it would carry significant cost implications in terms of the budget that HEQCO would require.

The second issue that I want to speak about concerns governance. If this bill proceeds and HEQCO is designated as the host agency, we think it will be critically important to have incorporated into the bill a formal data governance structure for the portal. This would ensure broad stakeholder involvement in decisions that are made about what data is collected and how it is used. It would also ensure appropriate oversight and accountability for the information.

There are provisions in the bill that make this formal data governance structure particularly important, because the bill gives HEQCO the sole authority to govern the collection of all the information that is identified in the bill. This information includes the publicly available data that I already talked about, but also new data that will be collected through a survey that is established by the regulations. The bill empowers HEQCO to govern the development of student satisfaction surveys and graduate satisfaction surveys. HEQCO is empowered to decide who's going to be surveyed, the form and manner of the survey and the timing of the survey.

The bill goes even further to allow HEQCO to prescribe any additional information that the council believes should be collected. Having been involved in provincial survey research projects, I can tell you that the costs of designing and implementing such a survey are significant, so we need to be aware that this bill does come with some major financial implications.

There are a couple of missing pieces of data that I just wanted to quickly reference. If this bill goes forward and these surveys are conducted, I want to make sure that some of this data is collected.

First of all, I've been pushing for more information about work-integrated learning programs. This bill makes reference to student satisfaction with co-op work placements, but does not address any of the other forms of work-integrated learning. We need to have that information to find out how students feel about their internship, their field placement, their practicum. I think that would add value to the dataset that is created.

Second, in addition to OSAP data about student debt, we should be collecting information about private debt that students accumulate. We know anecdotally that a lot of students are maxed out on their credit cards and unable to afford post-secondary education.

Finally, contract faculty has been an ongoing concern. We have an opportunity to collect some data included in this dataset about full-time versus contract faculty, and numbers of teaching hours by full-time profs versus contract faculty profs.

In closing, again, I support the bill and I applaud the member, but I'd like to see some changes made.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to support my colleague from Etobicoke Centre and his private member's bill, Bill 127.

Let me begin by acknowledging my background as a former nurse, as a former nursing professor and also as a former school board trustee. This bill could not be more timely. As we speak, Mr. Speaker, across the province of Ontario we have hundreds and thousands of students and international students right now trying to check out the scene: Which university or which college should they apply to for the coming year? On the timeliness of the bill, I can't speak enough to the member from Etobicoke Centre. The information that's being requested, if the bill gets passed, will ensure more consistency of information but, more importantly, transparency. We have heard the member from London West talk about the inconsistency of messages or information from the different universities and colleges.

1430

A couple of sections of the bill are very, very important in the passage of this bill. Section 8 talks about the employment and educational status of the graduates. At the end of the day, I hear—and I think other members in the House hear—consistent concerns about employment or employability after those programs. For the first time, we're going to have public data released on the university or college's website through the Higher Education Quality Council. Having that information is critically important; it allows the potential students to have that information when they make choices.

The other piece the member was very thoughtful in creating in this particular private member's bill—on page 3 of the proposed legislation—talks about the role of the privacy commissioner as well as the role of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: that the information is gathered; that there will be consultation with the privacy commissioner to make sure the information collected is useful but, more importantly, is protected; and that they're annually reporting to the minister about this particular information.

I'm not going to take too much time because I know my other colleagues also want to speak in support of the bill. I wanted to say thank you and congratulations to the member from Etobicoke Centre because students across the province right now are looking forward to information, and he's hopefully providing that information to all students.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very pleased to speak on Bill 127, the Pathways to Post-secondary Excellence Act.

I just wanted to recap very quickly that, basically, the bill is calling for us to collect and publish information about certain educational institutions—post-secondary education institutions—and putting this information on an easily accessible website that will allow for better, informed choice for students applying to the post-secondary institutions. This would allow students to improve the way they apply to these institutions.

I wanted to comment on a few things. Number one is that this reminds me of the HomeStars rating—if anybody has gone on to these types of websites where

you get to post a comment and a number of stars. We see it also with TripAdvisor. All of these are tools now that are incredibly powerful in changing not just the way people do business, but the way people are engaged and the way people interact with each other and share information.

In my community of Thornhill, people, in general, share a lot of information just talking, calling and on Facebook. You can see comments on Facebook saying, "Oh, no, no, no. You don't want your kid to go to this summer camp or this university because of this reason, because of that reason." "This is how you apply to make sure that you get the residence that you want: Apply with a friend. Apply without a friend"—that sort of advice that people make. This is taking it into a much more public forum where people who don't actually know each other can be engaged in the sharing of information and helping each other. Sometimes it can be a little dangerous because—are these real people posting on the websites? Can they be trusted? We have to ensure that there's definitely some accountability there and some transparency on who's posting, who's rating and how it's all being done.

Again, I have always said that a lot of people spend more time buying a car than they do thinking about their career and thinking about how to go about getting that career and what institution they should go to. We all know so many people who said they got a degree and it really wasn't worth the paper it was printed on. It wasn't very helpful. They enjoyed going to that institution, but if they had it all to do over again, they might have done things a little differently. I'm looking forward to seeing the public getting engaged, rating and commenting on the website.

Unfortunately, we have to go back to our high schools. The ratings aren't exactly high enough for our universities. Yes, our universities are rated very high, but unfortunately the universities themselves don't rate the high schools very high. Maybe that should be part of the discussion. I know that at the University of Waterloo, where I graduated optometry, engineers had a very low success rate moving from first year to second year. Basically, when I asked, I was told by professors, "We found out that we couldn't go by the high school marks at all. One high school would give students very high marks and we would take them in, and they just were not capable of doing what needed to be done. In other high schools, the students might have had lower marks. So we decided that as long as you finished high school with a 70%, we're going to take you in. We're going to take a starting class of 1,500 students and knock it right down to about 600 students for second year." Well, that's not fair to those students and those families. Those families invested a lot of money to send their students to engineering school, and the students obviously weren't successful.

I think we have to question why those students aren't successful. We want to see high success rates, not just in graduations from the program, but right from day one,

finishing first year in the program. We don't want students applying for programs and being accepted to programs where they are just not capable and don't have the background knowledge that they need in terms of the sciences and often even English writing skills.

We also want to see a level playing field, because many of the students who are taking the undergraduate programs are applying to some kind of specialty programs, and there are a lot of complaints that an 80% in physiology, the exact same course at Queen's, is comparable to a 90% in the same course at another university. I don't want to name universities, but it's very difficult to obtain the high marks at Queen's, at U of T and many of the other schools as well.

I know two of my children who graduated Western felt that it was a very fair marking system. They could go to the deans and say, "This exam question was ambiguous and this is why," and they could get the marks that they felt they deserved. I think that is, a lot of times, where the disgruntlement comes in: that they don't feel there's a level playing field.

In terms of the universities, obviously we're discussing today the OSAP loan program. There needs to be a level playing field there as well. We've heard about publicly assisted colleges and universities. Well, what about the private colleges and universities? In Thornhill, we have many students going to APLUS Institute for their dental hygienist program. They can't get OSAP designation because they just missed, by one or two percentage points, the graduation rates that they need. They are being compared to publicly assisted institutions for the same program of dental hygienist without any consideration that their program is very targeted to immigrants, very targeted to immigrants who may have degrees in dentistry and medicine and who are coming here to Canada, can't get qualified and are becoming dental hygienists. They have a lot of older population in the programs that they're being compared on. The older population have children already, have family situations, have part-time jobs, and may have to put off their graduation because of their families, so that may temporarily affect their graduation rates. What they said to me is that they are being squeezed out for the larger publicly subsidized institutions.

I compare that to the daycare fiasco that we're seeing. The daycare operators said the exact same thing. They feel they are being squeezed out for the larger, publicly subsidized daycare institutions, which happen to also be unionized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course we're here to support anything that gets the public engaged and gets the information to the public that they need and want.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 127, the bill that is brought forward by the member from Etobicoke Centre. In my very limited time,

let me first congratulate him on bringing a very well researched and thoughtful piece of legislation in front of this House that is going to make a very meaningful difference in the lives of our students.

You know this is a good bill when you've got all the major student groups who are supportive of the bill: the Canadian Federation of Students, the College Student Alliance, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance and the Ontario Graduate Students' Alliance, and I think representatives are here at Queen's Park with us. It's not that common that all these groups agree on one thing. I've worked with them all, so when they do agree on one thing, that means that this bill and this initiative is going to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students.

I've been a lifelong learner; I've had the opportunity to get four degrees from various universities. I can sort of relate to that experience as to how this type of information would have made a very big difference in my life if that kind of information was so rapidly available.

1440

Now, I admit that I went to school in the pre-Internet era, so one had to go through catalogues and whatnot to get that information. But in this age of technology, when so much information is available to us at our fingertips, through our computers, our iPads and our smart phones, I think it is a fantastic idea that we provide as much information as possible to our students in terms of programs of study, course selection, tuition fees etc., as has been presented through this bill.

I would say that this bill very much complements ecampusontario.ca, the initiative that has been launched by the province of Ontario, providing 13,000 post-secondary courses online, available for students. I think if you couple that resource, that portal, with the information that could be made available through Bill 127, we are really giving our students an incredible opportunity to succeed, to really be able to tailor-design their course selection and be able to ensure that they get quality post-secondary education not only in an established institution setting, at a college or university, but also online as well.

I very much support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments.

I now return to the member for Etobicoke Centre: You have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Yvan Baker: First of all, I'd like to thank the members who spoke to the bill: the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Education, the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, the member for London West, the member for Thornhill, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Thank you all very much for speaking to the bill.

I'd like to make a special mention of the opposition members who kindly deferred their time to allow a few of our speakers to step forward. Thank you for that as well.

There were a number of really important points raised by the members opposite, and I can't possibly address

them all. Let me just take a step back and try to quickly address them, but I look forward to having this bill further debated and talked about.

The decision that students make, I believe, about their post-secondary education is one of the most important decisions they will make in their lives, because of the size of the financial investment, but also because of how it affects their future career, their future academic career, their future success and their ability to achieve their potential. That's why I believe it's so important that students have the information they need to make those decisions.

I'm proud of, and I want to thank again, the student organizations that are here today that not only offered their support, but offered their support in building the bill, constructing the bill, giving me advice—pushback, feedback—to get it to this place, so thank you all once again.

A few points were raised by the members opposite, and I'll be brief. There were some excellent points. There was a comment made that there's a lot of information out there. There's absolutely no question that there is a lot of information out there. Some have tried to bring it together. The goal of this was to really make it comprehensive, to cover both colleges and universities—which is currently not available—but also to provide a resource that provides information at the program level rather than at the institution or the faculty level. That does not exist. Even where there are metrics available on some of the things that are in the bill, that's not available.

We've tried to draw a balance. We've tried to be pragmatic, remembering that this is designed for student use and student decision-making, and being conscious of the costs that could potentially be involved. That's why we've asked HEQCO to take it on. We believe they have a lot of the expertise, but more may be needed. Again, we hope that they will make it a priority.

Again, I believe that if we pass this bill, students will make better decisions that will lead to better outcomes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

POLICE CARDING PRACTICES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should instruct all police services in Ontario that while the law allows them to stop, detain, investigate and search individuals where there are reasonable grounds to do so, arbitrary and/or discriminatory street checks/carding violate the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code, have no place in Ontario, and that such practices should be immediately stopped.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Singh has moved private members' notice of motion number 59. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: To begin, the practice that has been going on across Ontario of arbitrary street checks,

or carding, have left, certainly, a deep impact on various communities across this province. Many community activists and many legal experts have said that the practice of arbitrarily stopping someone and collecting information or data sends a message that certain people in the community don't belong. That message, in and of itself, is very hurtful. It's very damaging. What it does is it impacts the self-worth and dignity of members of our community. For that reason, it is a practice that does not have a place in our province and it is a practice that this government must clearly indicate should not continue.

We must acknowledge that police officers provide an essential service in our society, and they do tremendous work. I salute their good work. In addition, police officers also have the right or the power to stop, to detain, to arrest and to search individuals where there are reasonable grounds. The problem is when the detention or the investigation occurs without any grounds. That's the story of many racialized people, many marginalized people in communities across Ontario.

In order to respect their lived experiences, the lived experiences of those who have been stopped in an unfair manner, those who have been made to feel unwelcome or unworthy in their own communities, and to respect the great work of legal experts who have raised this issue, we need, at a minimum, as a starting point, to send a message that carding and street checks, when they're arbitrary or discriminatory, should not continue in this province and should be immediately ended.

Now, as a framework for why this motion is so important, the government conducted a consultation process, and I had the honour of attending the consultation process. While I acknowledge that the government and, particularly, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services took the initiative to address an issue that, perhaps, wasn't something that he needed to address—so I acknowledge that he definitely took some initiative to address this issue—the problem with the consultation process was that the question as it was framed—and, as someone who has experienced street checks and carding that have been arbitrary and as someone who has spoken with community members—the community members themselves indicated that the starting point of the consultation process, the question that was framed, was: When you are stopped by the police, how should that interaction be governed? The problem with that question is that the community got up and said, "We don't want to be stopped in the first place."

The consultation process started off with a premise that didn't respect the reality of the community, didn't understand the concerns of the community. That's where the government failed to respect the lived experiences of those who have been impacted by this practice. As a starting point, we need to start from the position that this practice, which many people have complained about, many people have raised issues around—we have significant data around this practice being discriminatory—as a starting point, to respect those who have gone through

this, we need to say, at least, at a minimum, that discriminatory and arbitrary practices must end.

In addition, to frame this discussion, we have seen municipalities struggle with this issue. We have seen mayors initially take a position to support carding and then take a position to end carding, leaving people with a feeling there is not a clear resolution. We have seen police boards take up the issue and champion the position of the community, but their concerns and their recommendations fell on deaf ears.

Most recently and quite disturbingly, in my region, in the Peel region, the Peel Police Services Board met, discussed this issue and voted on this issue and voted to suspend the practice of street checks in the region of Peel until the province comes forward with regulations. It seemed to be a very reasonable request. The community was very encouraged by that request. It was made by and championed by the mayors of two of the largest cities in our province: the mayor of Brampton and the mayor of Mississauga. Both pushed forward this initiative. This initiative, pushed forward by representatives representing their community, was met with by the chief of police, Chief Evans, who essentially said no. I'll use my own words. She essentially said, "I will not do this. I will not listen to the recommendation of the police board."

1450

When we have a police board raising an issue and a police chief not following through on this issue, we know that the responsibility now falls on the Liberal government, the provincial government, to provide the leadership in this province. That's why this motion is so important. We need to send a clear message from the provincial government where policing, prosecution of criminal offences—essentially the buck stops here.

We need the province—we need this Legislative Assembly—to clearly, with one voice, indicate that this practice is not acceptable so that we can address some of the concerns that have arisen in various municipalities and police boards who have struggled with finding a resolution to this issue.

That's the context of why this motion is so important. Although it may seem very obvious to activists and to community organizers that this seems to be an obvious thing—why do we need a motion for something that's so obvious?—it hasn't been very obvious if you look at the lack of leadership on this issue and the lack of any clear guiding principles with respect to discriminatory practices like carding and street checks. That's why it's so important.

Just to provide some context of how prevalent this practice is: We've heard in the city of Toronto that there have been a great deal of incidents involving carding, and the data that's been collected indicates that black and brown people are more than three times more likely to be stopped than white people. Based on that indication of race, this is clearly a discriminatory practice which disproportionately stops racialized members of the community.

It doesn't end there. Analysis of the data also indicates that young people are stopped far more often than other

individuals. So there's also a discriminatory element with respect to age. When age and race are combined, those are the individuals that are most often stopped and made to feel like they don't belong in their own communities. In terms of talking about the personal experience, it is important that we look at the data, but there is a personal experience here too.

Desmond Cole wrote a very compelling piece in Toronto Life and shared the personal side to it. Though the data clearly indicates that this practice is discriminatory, it's the lived experience from the people who tell you: If you are stopped again and again and you're not doing anything in any manner that could be construed as illegal or requiring a criminal investigation—if you're stopped again and again, it literally makes you feel like you don't belong. That message has a significant impact on your potential to be successful in a career, in education and in pursuing employment. It has a debilitating impact.

In Peel region, most recently there was data collected that from 2009 to 2014, there were 160,000 street check or carding incidents. Out of that 160,000, when challenged with, "Where is the connection between the street check and the actual solving of a crime or providing some benefit to society?", Police Chief Evans was only able to provide six examples.

One hundred and sixty thousand times, people were stopped who had not committed any offence. Data was taken from them, they were questioned, and only six examples were provided. Presumably, this practice had been going on, some of the evidence suggests, as early as the 1980s; maybe even the 1970s. For over 30 years to be able to provide only six examples shows that there is not the evidentiary basis for the practice.

In terms of the suggestion that people are able to walk away, and that the province doesn't have to provide this guideline because people have the right to walk away, there is a decision from the Supreme Court of Canada which I think is quite important to highlight. In a 2009 decision, the *Grant* decision, the court says, "Visible minorities ... may, because of their background and experience, feel especially unable to disregard police directions, and feel that assertion of their right to walk away will itself be taken as evasive."

There is evidence that not only will racialized people be perhaps more often stopped, but if they are stopped, if a racialized person says, "I want to walk away," a court determined that they may not feel they have the ability to say that because of their experiences and maybe their power dichotomy. In addition, that act in and of itself might be construed as being evasive and be used negatively against that individual, so it's so important for us to address this issue.

This is something that is essential, because as a member of the law union—I need to indicate that there have been a number of people who worked so hard on this. I need to acknowledge the African Canadian Legal Clinic—the ACLC—the law union, the Concerned Citizens to End Carding and particularly the initiatives of

Michael Thompson and Gordon Cressy. I want to also acknowledge Knia Singh, who is a law student who has been stopped over 30 times and is now challenging this in the Superior Court.

What's important to note is that though our police officers, again, provide a tremendous service to our communities, if the practice of carding continues, it will continue to erode public trust with the police. That doesn't benefit the public and it doesn't benefit the police. If people don't feel they can trust the police, they won't be able to come forward and voluntarily provide information. While our police officers do a great job, we need to provide them with guidance. The province has a responsibility to do that, so that we can build the trust between the public and the police, so that people can come forward voluntarily, so that we have a more safe community and a safer society. We can do that. We can provide that leadership, and we can do that today by supporting this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. Let me start by saying that I appreciate the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton bringing this motion forward in this House, because it reaffirms the government's position on the issue of street checks and carding. It very well encapsulates and summarizes the position that we have been articulating from the very beginning. I want to take this opportunity again to restate to the House very clearly where we stand on the issue of street checks and carding, and then also to highlight to you the steps we have taken and the next steps to come.

As I have said before, I want to start with two very important foundational standards for us in this issue. Number one, there is zero tolerance when it comes to any kind of racial profiling or discrimination in interactions that our police engage in. The Police Services Act is very clear that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code must always be complied with. We will make sure that police practices are in conformity with that requirement in the Police Services Act and, of course, the rights outlined by the charter and the Human Rights Code.

Secondly, a very important foundational piece is that we as a government stand opposed to any arbitrary or random stops by police simply to collect information when there are no grounds or reasons to do so. I, on behalf of the government and as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, have been very clear on that point, from the very first press conference that I did when we announced that we'll be bringing regulations dealing with street checks on June 16, and then subsequently. In fact, in my conversations with the member opposite who brought this motion forward, I have restated that position many times. I think he admitted that he and I are exactly on the same page, and I appreciate that.

In fact, on September 1, 2015, of this year, I put out a statement after having extensive consultations across the

province. I think I attended about seven of those—we had seven, and I attended about five of those consultations. I was happy to see the member opposite at two of those consultations, where we heard from people and their lived experiences. It was emotional, and I will never discount anybody's lived experiences in terms of what they may have faced—not just in Toronto and not just in Peel region, but we're talking about Ottawa, London, Thunder Bay, Hamilton and other communities across the province.

As a result, because we heard very loud and clear what the people were telling us, on September 1, I put out a statement. I just want to read one part of that statement because I think it's instructive, where it says that, "We have heard from the community that street checks by definition are arbitrary as well as discriminatory and therefore cannot be regulated — they must simply be ended. The province agrees that these types of stops must end." Speaker, that is a very clear statement in terms of our intentions of stopping this unconstitutional and discriminatory practice.

1500

As a result of the consultations and the good advice we have received, we've been working very hard in drafting the regulation, and we've been meeting with policing partners, like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Association of Ontario and the Toronto Police Association. Our civil liberties partners like the African Canadian Legal Clinic, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Information and Privacy Commissioner, along with the Ontario Ombudsman, have also been giving us advice.

Speaker, what we're doing through our regulation is twofold: as I mentioned earlier, banning or prohibiting the practice of street checks as an arbitrary, random way of stopping people when there is no cause or reason but simply to collect information, but we're going a step further. What we're doing is that where there are reasonable grounds, as the member opposite has said, that it is appropriate for the police to stop, when there are reasonable grounds to stop somebody because there is suspicion of some illegal activity or you want to prevent illegal activity, even those interactions, which are voluntary in nature, must take place in a rights framework; the charter and the Human Rights Code shall apply.

What are those principles around providing cautions, around receipting, how long you keep the information, what happens to that information and how you store that information, what is appropriate training when it comes to police engaging in those voluntary interactions, and of course, accountability and transparency of the information collected so that we can better understand whether this type of practice is effective or not?

Speaker, in my limited time, I want to once again be absolutely clear that the government is committed to banning street checks, or carding, as an arbitrary way of stopping people and collecting information when there is no cause. But we also want to ensure that when the police

can stop because there are reasonable grounds, the stops take place in a rights framework.

Therefore, I support the motion, because it reaffirms the position we have been saying. We have been working very hard in drafting these regulations so that the public can have access to them and police services know exactly what the rules are. In the coming weeks, we will be speaking about those regulations as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'm proud to speak to this motion on behalf of the PC Party and to convey our support for the motion. Speaker, and all members here in the Legislature, I'm reminded every time I walk from the main legislative building to my office in the north wing of a profound statement that is engraved on the walls of the passageway. It says, "Where minds and souls find freedom's ways."

The builders of our democracy understood, without reservation, that this institution was and is the safeguard for the freedoms and liberties of the people of Ontario. They and we all ought to understand that it is only societies and communities that safeguard the freedoms and liberties of people that are truly safe and secure. One only has to visit other countries, such as North Korea and Saudi Arabia, among many others, to know and understand first-hand that societies that arbitrarily or unduly limit people's freedoms and liberties are also places where individual safety is in jeopardy.

We as representatives have a duty to both ensure that our police officers have reasonable and proportional tools to conduct their work and protect people and property from crime, but also ensure that these tools do not contradict our constitutional safeguards of freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention.

I welcome the member's motion. The conversation and debate on the matter of street checks and carding in my view is long overdue, but it is essential and necessary. The minister's public consultations, although he spoke briefly of them, in my view have been more of a facade and not truly a reasonable and responsible approach.

The minister's assertion that he will create regulations causes me and many others great concern. It would be unwise and detrimental if the minister used his authority to create regulations without first bringing his proposals in the form of a bill to this House for our rigorous scrutiny, examination and evaluation by all members of the House.

It would also be inconceivable, Speaker, that the minister would be able to prescribe by regulation in sufficient detail the correct manner to deal with the millions of police interactions with people in such a diverse province as Ontario—such a diverse province, with communities of small rural and remote communities, of mid-sized cities and even North America's fourth-largest city.

I would also add that, whenever challenges and problems arise regarding public policy, it is always best to take a moment and study the problem through the lens of

first and primary principles. That is what we have done on this side of the House. It ought to be clear and readily understood that police do have the authority to detain and question anyone if they have reasonable and probable grounds to do so, or if there are exigent circumstances present. This is and always has been an appropriate constraint on the powers of police and a reasonable limit upon the freedoms of people. The motion by the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton is consistent with these principles.

I'd like to conclude with a passage from a former chief High Court justice of Ontario, who also presided over the Ontario Royal Commission Inquiry into Civil Rights, commissioned by Premier John Robarts in the 1970s. His name was Justice James McRuer.

"The object of the Royal Commission, over which I have the honour to preside, is to strengthen the foundations and pillars of justice by drawing blueprints for improvement of the laws of Ontario as they express the power of the state in its relation to the individual. Laws are not weapons but shields serving to protect and regulate the respective rights, freedoms and liberties of the individuals from whom the authority and power of the state is derived."

When this comes to a vote, I hope we all leave this chamber and remember that profound statement: "Where minds and souls find freedom's ways."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to add my voice to this debate today. We know that police do a professional and vital job in our communities. The nature of policing has been changing as more and more responsibilities are being put at the feet of police.

Police are the only 24-hour response system and, as such, end up acting as law enforcement, social workers, counsellors, crisis management and any other role that fills a gap. Our society needs to have the resources and supports across communities so that police roles are clear and training and services can support them.

The government cannot keep cutting social services and expect the police to pick up the slack. We need strong leadership from this provincial government to provide consistent, province-wide clarity so that police can do the kind of community policing and engaging that we all need and want and so that the public can have confidence in this system.

I live in a community, as we all do, and everyone wants to feel safe and be safe in that community. I want the police in my community to be out and about interacting with and protecting members of my community. I want them to have the resources and tools they need. However, I also want my neighbours—all of them—to feel that they can participate freely in the community. I want all members of the greater community to walk freely down the street without feeling discriminated against or feeling unwelcome. I want the children of my community to grow up and be valued by what they contribute and who they are, and not how they appear. I

would like to imagine a community where no one is marginalized or fearful in their own neighbourhoods.

1510

I'm standing today to speak to an important motion brought forward by my colleague the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, who serves as our justice critic. This is a motion to end arbitrary and discriminatory street checks by police. This motion is not about taking away necessary policing tools. Street checks happen all the time, but when they happen without a reason, when they happen arbitrarily and without cause, then they shouldn't be happening. Addressing and ending arbitrary carding isn't going to solve the larger problem or close the racial divides within our society, but it is part of the picture.

I grew up with cops in my family, and an appreciation for police and the unimaginable work that they do every day. I also grew up thinking of the police in my community as the people to turn to in case of trouble. It wasn't until later in my life that I realized that life is more complicated, and different communities have different histories, different experiences and relationships with police. If there is a way to build trust between police and various communities, then we need to find it and we need to start.

I would imagine that the most important tool, the most effective tool in policing and investigations, would be trust. How many people will turn to the police with what they know or what they have seen when it comes to crime or reporting, if they don't feel that information is going to be protected, if they don't feel they are going to be protected, without that trust? When public trust is weakened, Mr. Speaker, then so is the system. We need to find a way to strengthen it.

This is an emotional and vital conversation that we're having here today, but it is part of the larger discussion about racialized communities and a systemic divide. We see discrimination and racial uneasiness across our society. Here's one example: One of my housemates years ago was a young black man, and when we were in grocery stores I would notice that people around him or employees would watch him, for no reason that I could discern. No one was following me around, no one was eyeing me suspiciously, but he was a different story and I resented it. He shrugged it off because it's his "normal," but that shouldn't be someone's normal in Ontario. It shouldn't be someone's normal anywhere.

He also never went driving with a ball cap or a hoodie on, because he figured he would get pulled over. Well, that shouldn't be something that happens. If he was speeding, go ahead and pull him over; then he deserves it. But the point is, people need to be able to live their lives without feeling targeted or stigmatized.

I would like to share the words of my friend and neighbour Gary. Gary says, "My earliest experience with the police was not a good one. I can still remember how it felt as if it were yesterday. Anxious, nervous, scared. And for what, just walking down the street, minding my own business. My story is no different from countless males and females of colour. That feeling of 'What have

I done now.' I really don't think that feeling goes away. That uneasiness becomes ingrained in our DNA. Mistrust, lack of communication, deep-seated fear. How do we change this feeling, this perception. I really don't think you can. We are talking about decades of mistrust. Moving forward, we need to have open and real discussions about how to deal with individuals on an individual basis and not use the same brush to condemn or vilify others based on a look or skin tone. I don't want my three girls to grow up in a society where they are judged based on their colour. I am a 44-year-old black male. I also happen to be a teacher. If I were walking down the street late at night wearing a ball cap, would you stop me?"

Arbitrarily stopping and interrogating people in our communities and recording identifying data without articulable cause is not okay. It damages the relationships between the police and members of the communities. It undermines the goal of encouraging trust and interaction between law enforcement and citizens. It infringes on our rights under the charter and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

There is a path forward, and it is up to us here, to police across the province, to community members, to community leaders, and to legal and human rights groups to find it. It needs to be a solution with the best possible conditions for law enforcement, the clearest rules for officers and the strongest protection for the rights of all Ontarians. We oppose the erosion of trust and community relationships; therefore, I stand in support of this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I am pleased to rise today and speak on this very important issue, private member's motion number 59. I'd like to start out by thanking my colleague the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton for introducing this motion.

We're all fortunate, Mr. Speaker, to be living in an open, accepting and diverse society, and the reason we're able to live in such a society is because this province and this country have placed a premium on individual rights and freedoms. Now, this government has been clear from the outset that our commitment to protecting human rights is unwavering, and discrimination of any kind will not be tolerated.

It's important for Ontarians to know that if you define a street check or carding as "an arbitrary or random stop without cause and for the sole purpose of collecting and storing personal information," we agree that these types of stops must end.

I can fully appreciate the need to stop this often damaging and discriminatory practice. As a journalist, I had the opportunity to speak to many people over the years who recounted troubling and disturbing stories about carding. These experiences are something no Ontarian should have to endure. They are emotional and often scarring experiences.

That's why our government has been working hard for some time now to develop a regulation that will be

mandatory and enforceable for police services across Ontario—and please remember the word "enforceable." This is a complex issue and must be dealt with adequately.

In fact, throughout the past summer, we've engaged and consulted with Ontarians across the province, encouraging feedback from stakeholders and interested parties. Why? Because we want to know the truth, and we want to make sure that we're getting the information we need in order to act appropriately.

We also encouraged MPPs, community groups and other organizations to hold their own discussions on this very important topic, and these groups were invited to present the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services with their feedback.

These consultations are vital to doing the right thing, and that's why they are so important. They're not a facade. Instead, they are important research and they make sure that we are moving forward in the right way. We have now completed these public consultations, and the government is reviewing the feedback to help develop a regulation to bring forward this fall.

Now, throughout this process, there have been two key principles driving Ontario's approach. As you heard earlier, firstly, we have to make sure that we are protecting human rights—and we take that seriously—and have zero tolerance for racism or marginalization, including any form of discrimination.

Secondly, we're opposed to stops that do not have a clear policing purpose and which are predicated solely on bias. The government has heard from the community that street checks by definition are arbitrary, as well as discriminatory and, therefore, cannot be improved or regulated. If that is how you define a street check, then our new regulation will end those types of stops. That's what we're working towards.

Our consultations have focused on developing a new rights-based approach to ensure that interactions with police officers are consistent with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Our forthcoming regulation will help to build and restore confidence—and that's very important—between police and residents who are part of the same community. Furthermore, it will help police officers by removing ambiguities and providing them with clear and easy-to-follow rules.

This motion number 59 is identical to what the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has said on a number of occasions when asked about our forthcoming regulation, so I really don't understand what it's trying to accomplish. We're already moving on much of this.

In fact, on June 16 in the *Globe and Mail*, the minister is quoted as saying, "Our aim for this regulation is to prevent unjustifiable police stops for no reason or without cause."

To the CBC, again on June 16, the minister said, "The status quo in these cases is not acceptable and cannot continue"—or on October 12, where the minister was

quoted in the *Globe and Mail* as saying, “If the police are engaging in a process where they are stopping someone in a random and arbitrary way, there is no cause or reason to do so.... If they simply want to collect information for their database—not acceptable.”

There’s no question that our government supports the ending of discriminatory street-checking practices based solely on bias. We are already working on trying to make sure this doesn’t occur. We have supported it consistently, we have supported it strongly and we’ve been putting that support into action with the work that’s being done to bring forward a new regulation this fall.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak today. I want to make sure that everyone here understands that our government and our ministry are moving forward with some very clear actions to ensure that we are doing the right consultations and we’ll move forward with an informed piece in the near future.

Thank you very much for having me here today and thank you for listening to my comments.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I rise today to speak, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, to the private member’s motion from the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I welcome the member’s motion.

Carding is a practice by which police officers can stop people and request to see their personal credentials even if they are not suspected of a crime. The practice has been used by police for nearly a decade here in Toronto, creating a sizable database of recorded personal information and interaction details.

Based on data compiled by the *Toronto Star* back in 2013, black males accounted for 25% of all people carded in Toronto. Consequently, many questions have been raised about the degree to which police are targeting young black males, as data shows that black males were 17 times more likely to be carded than Caucasians.

Ontario’s former Ombudsman issued his own report on carding and called it “a form of arbitrary detention” and said that, in his opinion, it was a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Last June, Gerry McNeilly, director of the Office of Independent Police Review, said that the issue of carding has eroded public trust in police and that the practice must be free of racial bias.

Last June, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services announced a review of the practice of carding, with a view to bringing in new legislation this fall to standardize the practice of carding across Ontario. The minister said the Liberal government would not end the practice. While it was about time that this government finally addressed the issue, I feel that the minister’s response was too little and too late.

Perhaps what finally forced the government to turn their minds to carding was the lawsuit that was launched last June by George Singh, a 40-year-old law student at York University. George is black. He says that he’s been

stopped by police 30 times. George has launched a charter challenge against the practice of carding and is asking that all police records created as a result of those 30 stops be destroyed. He says that he was never advised by the police that the answers he gave them in response to the questions they asked him when they stopped him were being kept in a database. He says that in one particular month he was stopped by police four times.

Now, our support of the member’s motion doesn’t mean that we believe that our police, who are duty bound to protect life and property, should be denied the tools to investigate criminal activity. Police departments throughout Ontario must have intelligence-led policing tools which will result in lower crimes. We’ve heard from various police services of certain instances where information gathered from street checks or community checks assisted them in solving a crime.

Speaker, it’s interesting to note: I spent some time chatting with our Chatham–Kent Police Service chief, Chief Gary Conn. He told me that from April 2014 to April 2015, 2,263 street checks, as he called them, were conducted, of which 91% were Caucasian, 7% were black and 2% were aboriginal.

Just last week, a young man was sentenced for a deadly and senseless attack six years ago that killed Christopher Skinner. The crime went unsolved for four years. According to Detective Sergeant Gallant of the Toronto Police Service homicide squad, it was information gathered from a street check that broke the case wide open, after someone came forward with the information. Gallant said, “When you are only working with limited information ... sometimes utilizing the contact cards and the information that we have in those databases is able to allow us to make connections... It led to the identity of the people involved and that furthered the investigation.”

While street checks can be a useful investigative tool, as the head of the Office of Independent Police Review director has said, they must be free of racial bias. That’s why we’re concerned with how the practice of carding has been carried out. There has been no information released by police that when individuals have been stopped, they are advised that they are under no legal obligation to answer any questions and are free to go if they wish. There has been no information released by police that when individuals do provide police with information that they are advised that the information is being kept in a database. There has been no information released by police that the race and gender of those being carded is proportionate to, and representative of, the race and gender demographics of the communities where those street checks are taking place. Without that information, the public’s confidence in policing has, unfortunately, eroded. We can’t allow that to continue.

Additionally, the motion’s wording does not ban street checks as a whole. This is something that I support, as appropriate checks are, in fact, a vital policing tool. It simply states that arbitrary or discriminatory street checks have no place in Ontario, and we agree.

We value our police and value the need for interactions, but interactions should not be based on racial

profiling. Carding for some communities has, unfortunately, fallen into that category. Therefore, I cannot support arbitrary or discriminatory stops. For these reasons, I am supporting the member's motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the people I represent in London West to speak in support of the motion brought forward by my colleague the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

The motion calls on the government to end the practice of arbitrary and/or discriminatory street checks, which are also known as carding. The motion highlights the need for greater clarity on the difference between random, arbitrary and unconstitutional stops of people just to collect information and stops that are legally permitted because there are reasonable grounds.

Clarity around what is permitted and what is illegal is absolutely essential to enable the police to establish and maintain public trust, which is perhaps the most important and the most effective policing tool available to ensure community safety.

This is not just an issue in the GTA, and we've heard a lot about the concerns that have been raised. It's an issue that is a concern across the province, including in my own community of London. In 2014, last year, London police conducted 8,400 street checks, which is about three times the rate in Ottawa and Hamilton—which are both larger cities than London—and about five times the rate in Windsor.

Particularly troubling to people in my community are the statistics that the police presented showing that black people and aboriginal people are disproportionately represented among the Londoners who are stopped. Black people make up only 2.2% of London's population but 7% of those who were stopped. Similarly, aboriginal people make up just 1.9% of London's population but represent 5% of those who were stopped. This is in line with the evidence from other jurisdictions: that police carding without cause disproportionately targets marginalized communities, particularly young black and brown men as well as other young people and the poor. The result has been to stigmatize racialized communities, which can lead to a breakdown in relationships between these communities and the police.

This August, about 100 people from London attended the ministry consultation on street checks that was held in my community. The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton spoke about respecting people's lived experiences. I wanted to read one of the comments that was shared at that consultation:

"If you don't live it, you don't understand. I want you to understand. We are all Canadians. We are all from London. Unfortunately, we have some police who do not work with the community. The police need the community. Police need to be trained to work hand in hand with the community. We need to work together. The community needs the police as well. They need their safety and their respect. The police have to respect. When

police are hired, they need to be trained in diversity. We need to have hand in hand respectful engagement. We need to stop the random checks."

1530

Speaker, the consultation in London opened with participants asked to define "street checks," and this, to most people in the room, underscored that there is currently no standard definition already in the police act on what constitutes a stop that does not violate human rights.

Last week, London Police Service chief John Pare made a presentation to the London Police Service board. He acknowledged that they do not have a specific, clearly defined procedure related to street checks. He also pointed to other gaps, including a lack of direction as to how street checks are to be documented and the need for greater supervisory oversight and quality control on the data collected. In response to many of the concerns that were raised at the public consultation and also a motion that was brought forward from the London Diversity and Race Relations Advisory Committee, the chief committed to developing a strict protocol subject to regular review and audit to instruct officers on how and when to conduct street checks and what documentation to complete. He's also working on a data system that would link street checks to what happens afterwards. This, as we know, is a frequent concern that is raised—to understand the relationship between a street check and whether a crime has been prevented or a crime solved.

The leadership of Chief Pare is commendable. However, what it emphasizes is the need for clear provincial direction so that police forces are not all out there on their own developing separate local protocols, and that police forces are adhering to standard procedures on the collection and use of data that is legally acquired through legal stops. Clearly, police can do the work that we expect them to do—they can maintain public safety; they can protect the public—without continuing the practice of street checks without cause.

For that, I commend the member who brought forward the motion. I commend all of the members of this House who have spoken in support of the motion today. I look forward to seeing some clear provincial direction and consistency on this issue across the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Bramalea—Gore—Malton. You have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank all the members for joining in this debate, for sharing your concerns and sharing your thoughts.

It has been a very positive discussion and I hope that this will be one of the first steps in ensuring that the province provides clear direction and leadership on this file. Up to now, there hasn't been the voice of this Legislative Assembly clearly directing the opinion of this House in terms of what is acceptable and what is not. My hope is that now, with this motion, if it passes today—and I hope it does—it will send a clear message to the entire province that arbitrary and discriminatory carding and street checks are not acceptable and must immediately be ended.

I also want to take a brief moment and introduce some guests who have been here to support this motion: the African Canadian Legal Clinic's executive director, Margaret Parsons, as well as two youth who are involved with the ACLC, Daniel David and Nicolas Denny, and Howard Morton from the Law Union of Ontario. Thank you all for being here today.

I also want to acknowledge the work of the PAO, the Police Association of Ontario, the executive director, Mr. Reid, and the president, Mr. Chapman, who we discussed this issue with as well. I want to acknowledge their contribution.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue. We need to provide this leadership. There are jurisdictions, there are municipalities right now, that are still struggling with this issue. There are people who are citizens who are still facing the stigma of being stopped in their own communities. We need to send a clear message that they belong in their own communities and that they should not be stopped unfairly. That message begins with passing this motion today.

Again, I want to thank you all for being here. I want to thank you for your support, and I am looking forward to ensuring that we begin to push the yardstick forward to end this practice and move towards greater inclusion and greater protection for our society and our communities. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I am very pleased to rise and welcome Margaret Parsons and the members of the African Canadian Legal Clinic. I just want to thank her for her continued advocacy on behalf of the black community.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

We'll take the vote on that item at the end of private members' public business.

TREE PLANTING

Mr. Ted Arnott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry should lead a coordinated effort, working with municipalities, school boards, community organizations, the business community, the forestry industry and volunteers, to take the county of Wellington's Green Legacy program province-wide, with the stated goal of planting 150 million trees as a project to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the province in Confederation in 2017.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Arnott has moved private member's notice of motion number 58. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This resolution starts from the simple premise that global warming is a fact, and if human activity in the form of greenhouse gas emissions is a contributing or accelerating factor with regard to climate change, as the vast majority of our

scientific community worldwide believes, then humankind needs to plant more trees to absorb the excess carbon in the earth's atmosphere.

It is a call to action to the Minister of Natural Resources and the government—yes—but it is also a call to action to all Ontarians who care about climate change and want more done to confront it. And it's intended to highlight how the county of Wellington has shown extraordinary leadership with its Green Legacy tree-planting program that inspires us to ask that the provincial government take Wellington county's Green Legacy program province-wide.

I have participated in this private members' ballot item process over a number of years, and believe in it. I believe it's an important aspect of our responsibilities as members, and it's an opportunity for us to raise issues that otherwise might not be raised.

I have had a number of private member's bills through the years that were either passed into law or adopted as government policy.

In 1994, I had an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act to allow volunteer firefighters to use flashing green lights on their personal vehicles when responding to an emergency. It was passed into law.

In 1998, I had a resolution encouraging the government to expand the Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program so that children identified through the program who were at risk would receive the necessary services and supports they needed for their healthy growth and development. That was adopted as government policy.

In 1998, I had an amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Act to allow rural municipalities to support their firefighters to the greatest extent possible when it came to workers' compensation coverage. The government passed into law a bill identical to mine.

In 2000, I had a resolution asking that the government of Canada take immediate action to fully restore the Canada health and social transfer to 1994-95 levels. I worked to establish a fair funding approach which ensured that these cash transfers would increase to keep pace with future cost pressures. That was adopted as government policy.

In 2002, I had an amendment to the fire services act to support two-hatter firefighters and uphold their right to volunteer in their home communities. It had the most hours of debate of any private member's bill in the history of the Legislature. Thirteen years later—this year—the principle of my bill has been adopted as government policy and is reflected in Bill 109, which is currently before the House.

In 2008, I had a private member's bill to recognize Emancipation Day on August 1 passed into law. It was the very first private member's bill ever introduced in the House that was co-sponsored by members from different parties.

In 2009, I had another amendment to the WSIB act to ensure that volunteer firefighters were covered under the government's presumptive legislation and treated the same as full-time firefighters. That was adopted as government.

In 2013, I had the Lincoln Alexander Day bill, which was passed into law. It was co-sponsored by members from all three parties.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Are we done bragging?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I believe in this process. I believe in these Thursday afternoons, Mr. Speaker.

I want to introduce guests we have here today: Scott Wilson, CAO of the county of Wellington, is here. Scott worked with the late Brad Whitcombe, former mayor of Puslinch township and warden of Wellington county, to develop the original vision for Green Legacy. He is joined by Mark Van Patter, the manager of planning and development, Green Legacy committee chair, county of Wellington; and Rob Johnson, Green Legacy nursery manager, county of Wellington. We have Don McCabe, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, here, as well as my legislative assistant, Dan Roest, who is here from my Queen's Park office. He has helped me prepare for this speech this afternoon.

1540

Last May, I was at a meeting in Georgetown with the Halton Hills Cultural Roundtable group. This group is getting an early start on planning events that they want to have in Georgetown just two years away, in 2017, when across the country we celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. Our member of Parliament, newly re-elected Mike Chong, was also there. In his remarks about the federal programs that they're setting up to support these community celebrations, he looked at me and reminded all of us that not only did a confederated Canada begin on July 1, 1867, but on that same date, the province of Ontario, as part of the new federation, also came into being.

My immediate thought, of course, was, "What is the province going to do to celebrate its 150th anniversary in just two years' time? What could the province do to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its birth?" My next thought immediately was that they could follow the lead of the county of Wellington and take the Green Legacy program province-wide.

Imagine a province-wide effort to plant 150 million trees to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Ontario. Imagine an invitation to every community group, service club, school board, church, municipality, conservation authority and so on—the private and public sectors alike—indeed, every organization that seeks to do good works in the province, and every resident of Ontario who cares about the environment, greenhouse gas emissions and global warming, and the planet that we leave to the coming generations. Imagine city residents leaving the GTA for a weekend and coming to small-town and rural Ontario and northern Ontario to help out; inviting them to help out with an organized and administered Ontario Green Legacy—150 million trees to celebrate 150 years of the province of Ontario within a united Canada.

Could we do it, Mr. Speaker? Could we actually plant 150 million trees in one year? My belief is we could, if the lessons learned in the county with Green Legacy were to be employed across the province—and not just the

lessons learned. We also need the leadership, the community spirit and the inspiration and excitement of a large, publicly articulated goal and the focus that county council, staff and volunteers have shown to make Green Legacy an ongoing, permanent program and a beacon of hope and leadership for humankind.

What is the Green Legacy program in the county of Wellington? It started in 2004 as an effort to plant 150,000 trees in Wellington county for the county's 150th anniversary. The program provides free trees to conservation authorities, municipalities, community organizations, environmental groups and landowners, and it targets marginal agricultural land for reforestation, watercourse buffers, living snow fences and farm windbreaks. The Green Legacy nursery was built in 2006 at Little Tract county forest, and the program has received awards from three of our local conservation authorities.

The one millionth tree was distributed in 2010. It has been recognized—in fact, in 2010—by the United Nations Billion Tree Campaign and the Lee Symmes Municipal Award from Ontario Nature in 2012. That award was given to the county of Wellington for the program. The northern nursery opened near Luther Marsh in 2012. It is a GRCA—Grand River Conservation Authority—and school board partnership. The 1,750,000th tree in the program was distributed in 2014.

Some recent stats from the 2015 Green Legacy wrap-up:

- over 1.8 million trees have been planted by the community since 2004;
- a total of 161,000 trees were distributed this spring;
- 38 elementary schools took part;
- 33 schools and 7,700 primary students planted almost 14,000 seeds in the classroom;
- 3,100 junior students visited our northern and southern nurseries;
- over 1,000 intermediate students planted over 7,000 trees in our community;
- 35 schools who had 100% participation are going to receive the Green Legacy Kids Who Care Award for the 2014-15 school year;
- over 200 tree orders were submitted by landowners;
- 5,000 trees were given to each of the seven municipalities for the Green Legacy tree distribution days.

So the value of the program—it has tremendous benefits, Mr. Speaker. We see benefits that are environmental, with respect to climate change, with respect to agriculture, safety, education and volunteerism.

I asked the legislative library to research some of the stats with respect to the reforestation trees that the forestry industry plants each year. We see that, as recently as 2009-10, nearly 82 million trees were replanted by the industry to replace trees that had been harvested. That number has been diminishing. Apparently, the most recent stats show that, in 2011-12, nearly 50 million trees were replanted. But I think that those trees that are planted as part of the forestry industry's replanting programs should be counted towards the total.

I am also aware that Trees Ontario is a partner with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources's 50 Million

Tree program, so I would acknowledge that the government is already doing good work in this regard, but we need to expand the effort dramatically. This is part of the United Nations Billion Tree Campaign. The United Nations goal, of course, is to plant one billion trees worldwide each year. Ontario is currently committed to planting 50 million trees by 2025. My proposal, of course, would represent a significant expansion in our tree-planting activities.

Mr. Speaker, I have received and been encouraged by endorsements from a number of very important community organizations and provincial organizations. I wish I had more time to read some of the comments, because they expressed their view that this is a good idea and it's something that they would like to see happen. The county of Wellington passed a resolution in support of the initiative, not surprisingly. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture indicated wholehearted support. They said that not only would this be "an important symbolic gesture and recognition of our heritage" but the resolution would provide "a practical outcome, leaving a lasting, positive legacy for generations to come. Expanding Ontario's tree cover can have positive impacts on greenhouse gases, erosion control and soil health" across the province.

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario has also expressed support for our proposal. They say, "This initiative will involve volunteers of all ages, bringing people together at the community level. It would also create positive change long into the future of our great province. Planting and caring for trees is a way to care for our communities, promote biodiversity and care for our environment."

I received a very eloquent recommendation of endorsement from Laurent Thibault from Georgetown, who is a community leader in our community of Georgetown. He indicated this: "I am happy to add my support for Ted Arnott's idea, which would be an entirely 'made in Ontario' project with 100% local content and local impact that every Ontario resident could participate in."

"When our descendants celebrate the 250th anniversary of Ontario as a province, they will sit in the shade of 150 million magnificent hardwood trees and thank us for having that foresight and vision."

From Toni Ellis, the coordinator of NeighbourWoods on the Grand in Centre Wellington: "We are pleased to support Mr. Arnott's resolution to engage all Ontarians in tree-planting initiatives to celebrate our 150th birthday. On behalf of many urban forest NGOs, I think I can safely say we would welcome the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Natural Resources to develop a workable plan that would support this very ambitious program."

We've also received an endorsement from the executive director of the Ontario Professional Foresters Association as well as Dr. Faisal Moola, who is the director general, Ontario and northern Canada, of the David Suzuki Foundation, who has also expressed support.

So I think there's broad-based support for what we're suggesting, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask all members to consider this important initiative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is always an honour and a privilege that I do not take for granted, being called upon to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the residents in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh. Today, I am delighted to be able to say a few words on the motion brought forward by my friend the member for Wellington-Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott. His is a great motion. It's full of ambition. It's inspirational and worthy of support from all members in the House. The motion proposes that we get Ontario's residents involved in an ambitious plan to plant 150 million trees as a symbolic way of celebrating Canada's 150th anniversary.

Speaker, I love the idea. I wish I would have thought of it myself.

There is a poem we all studied in grade school. "Trees" was written by Joyce Kilmer; his first name was Alfred, by the way.

1550

He was an American and wrote "Trees" in 1913, but he was killed by a sniper's bullet in France at the Second Battle of the Marne in 1918. His poem lives on, Speaker. With your permission, "Trees":

I think I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

We were kids when we first heard that poem. Had we planted trees the day we heard it, they would be towering above us today, keeping us cool in the shade and cleansing the air we breathe by filtering the carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide and other pollutants such as ozone. By filtering these pollutants, trees reduce the conditions that cause asthma and other respiratory problems.

Just a few years ago in Ontario, close to 37,000 visits to the emergency rooms were associated with issues caused by smog or air pollution. In Ontario in 2008, nearly 10,000 people died prematurely because of air pollution. Asthma is now the leading cause of kids missing

school in Ontario, and it's the main reason our children are admitted to hospitals.

The experts tell us that asthma rates in young kids drop by 25% for every 343 trees per square kilometre. Trees are the lungs of the earth. We need them to survive and we need more of them now more than ever.

I've talked in this House several times about the need to plant more trees. I've told you how, as a proud member of the Essex Region Conservation Authority, I helped plant hundreds of trees over my seven years as a city councillor in Windsor. I still go out every Earth Day and pitch in with the authority's annual tree-planting events.

Trees make our lives more enjoyable. We're more relaxed when we're in and around trees. Trees reduce our stress levels. We all have our favourite seasons, but many of us love the fall because of the vibrant colours of the leaves. Some of us don't mind so much that we sometimes have to rake up those leaves, and maybe they're even from the neighbours. It's good exercise, raking leaves. Our kids and our grandkids love playing in them, and some of the neighbourhood dogs and cats have fun in them as well.

Trees are one of the legacies—a rich inheritance, if you will—that each of us can leave for future generations. There's a tree found in British Columbia and elsewhere, the Pacific yew. A drug taken from the bark of that tree is showing amazing results in the fight to cure ovarian cancer. One of every four pharmaceutical products used today comes from trees and plants found in tropical forests.

We can do this. We can make every effort to plant 150 million trees. It can be done. I know in my area, the Essex Region Conservation Authority has planted six million trees over the past 40 years.

We're heavily into the baseball playoffs now and heading towards the World Series, but just for a moment, let's talk football—the National Football League. The NFL, in recent Super Bowl events, was big into trees. In Detroit, the NFL planted 2,400 trees to combat greenhouse gas emissions from the events associated with the game. In Jacksonville, Florida, the NFL planted 1,000 trees for the same reason. If the NFL can get serious about trees, so can we.

More than one million of our residents have type 1 or type 2 diabetes. That's more than 8% of us, and experts tell us that the higher the incidence of smog or air pollution, the higher the rates of diabetes. I know that our tree cover rate in Windsor and Essex county is only 9%. Other parts in southern Ontario are worse off; they're closer to 5%. We should be closer to 30%, and some experts say that 40% to 50% would be better. I think our average tree cover in all of southern Ontario is about 22%.

This motion will help us all. The bottom line is: We need more trees. This is a wonderful idea that could kick-start us towards a healthier planet. It will also help us save millions of dollars because we won't be as affected by air pollution. Let's do this. We can do this. We owe it

to our children. We owe it to our grandchildren. We owe it to our residents. We owe it to ourselves. Let's all get behind this great idea.

A big thank you to the member from Wellington-Halton Hills for putting this in front of us this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Speaker, just before I begin, I'll be sharing my time with the member from St. Catharines. Were you sharing your time, member opposite?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This is private members' time, we just go around.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm absolutely delighted to rise today to speak to this very worthy topic, and I'd like to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills.

I'd also like to thank the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. I knew that you were involved in ERCA and I knew you were very passionate about this topic, but you described it so eloquently. You're a tough act to follow, but I'll do my best.

It's my pleasure to stand in this House today on behalf of the people of Burlington and speak to this worthy motion, as I mentioned. It is indeed a noble idea to leverage our love for trees and our forests, and in so doing engage citizens and community groups that not only share that passion, but also understand the positive contribution that trees make to greenhouse gas mitigation.

As we all know, climate change has become one of the greatest and most complex challenges facing not only our province, but our society as a whole. To fight climate change and the loss of biodiversity in Ontario, our government is committed to enhancing the amount of forest cover in our province on both crown and private land.

As has been mentioned by members opposite, excess carbon dioxide, caused by many factors, is building up in our atmosphere and contributing to climate change. Trees absorb CO₂, removing and storing the carbon while releasing the oxygen back into the air. Trees filter particulates out of the air by trapping them on their leaves and on their bark, and shade from trees slows water evaporation from thirsty lawns. They help to prevent soil erosion. They reduce runoff by breaking rainfall and help to prevent pollutants from entering our water tables—not to mention the beauty of our trees and forests and their contribution to both our rural and urban landscapes and the beautification of our neighbourhoods and communities.

Examples such as these make a clear case that planting more trees in Ontario is a good idea indeed and should be something in which we take great pride and invest much effort and dedication. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is currently working in partnership with Forests Ontario and over 65 conservation agency partners across Ontario to deliver our government's 50 Million Tree program, which will see the planting of 50 million new trees and the establishment of new forests on suitable private rural and urban land across Ontario by 2025.

Of particular importance is the fact that we have committed to planting one million of these trees in urban areas and communities across the province. Extreme weather events can cause devastation to urban tree canopies in very short periods of time. In fact, the ice storm of 2013 destroyed around 20% of the canopy in the city of Toronto alone. Neighbourhoods that just days before boasted beautiful and majestic mature trees along their streets suddenly found themselves confronting jagged and splintered stumps and debris. In my own community of Burlington where we received more than \$1 million as part of our share of the compensation for damage caused by the ice storm, that funding went to cover costs incurred in the cleanup efforts where numerous beautiful trees were lost.

The importance of replacing and restoring urban forests and canopy, however, goes beyond our desire to simply have visually pleasing communities and areas with shade. In fact, a study published just this past summer in the journal Scientific Reports, and conducted in the city of Toronto, including over 30,000 residents, found that having trees around you can have positive and long-lasting effects on your health. Marc Berman, a co-author of the study and also a psychologist at the University of Chicago stated, "Controlling for income, age and education, we found a significant independent effect of trees on the street on health. It seemed like the effect was strongest for the public [trees]. Not to say the other trees don't have an impact, but we found stronger effects for the trees on the street." He goes on to say that, "having 10 more trees in a city block, on average, improves health perception in ways comparable to an increase in annual personal income of \$10,000 and moving to a neighborhood with \$10,000 higher median income or being seven years younger." Boy, we'd all like that, wouldn't we?

1600

This just goes to show the impact that trees can have on our everyday lives, even if we're not conscious of it. I can tell you from personal experience and from conversations with constituents in my riding just how impactful trees can be to a neighbourhood. We are very fortunate in Burlington to be surrounded by the Niagara Escarpment, and there are many areas in our community that are full of lovely, mature trees, something that the residents are proud of and something that is very important to them. In fact, in April of this year, I joined members of my community, in partnership with the city of Burlington and BurlingtonGreen, for the annual Clean Up Green Up event, during which we planted over 200 trees. In addition, through the 50 Million Tree program, Burlington has seen almost 57,000 trees planted within its boundaries since 2007.

We also encourage private landowners and public agencies to plant trees on their own to support this initiative. Not only does the 50 Million Tree program offer a subsidy that offsets costs to the landowners, but it offers professional assistance to those who are interested in tree planting. On average, between 75% and 90% of planting costs are covered through the program. Inter-

ested individuals can utilize our tree atlas, which recommends native tree species best adapted to the region in which they reside.

We cannot, however, just plant trees in the communities and municipalities in which we live. An important component of ensuring that Ontario's forests remain vibrant and healthy includes the efforts of our partners in the forestry industry. In fact, you could say that between 2003 and 2013, over a billion trees were planted by forest licence holders on crown land as part of our forest renewal program. I'm very proud of this work and the work that our government is doing overall—the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry in particular—and what our partner organizations have done to increase the number of trees currently growing in Ontario. I have no doubt that we will continue to do so.

I applaud the member opposite for so passionately supporting initiatives like the county of Wellington's Green Legacy program that do so much in creating a positive community attitude towards creating and maintaining our forests. In fact, through our 50 Million Tree program, more than 750,000 trees have been planted in Wellington county. I know that officials from Wellington county are here today, and they should be very proud indeed of that statistic and their work.

As such, I'm pleased to say that I will be supporting this motion wholeheartedly, and I would encourage all of my colleagues here today to do the same. The importance of forests, whether it be urban, rural or even uninhabited areas, cannot be overstated. Trees are such a vital resource to Ontario for a myriad of reasons, and it is up to us as legislators to ensure that we leave the future generations of this province a legacy that is both clean and green.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I rise today in support of the member from Wellington—Halton Hills's motion calling on the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to lead a coordinated effort to plant 150 million trees to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the province of Ontario in Confederation in 2017.

Of the 107 million hectares of land in Ontario, 66% is forested—a land area equivalent to the size of Germany, Italy and the Netherlands combined. Ontario has approximately 85 billion trees, which comprises 17% of Canada's forests. Ontario exports \$3.6 billion of forest product per year. Trees are one of Ontario's key renewable resources. Ontario forests provide the world with countless essential products that we all use every day.

The forestry sector also provides much-needed employment opportunities in Ontario, especially in northern Ontario. Ontario's forest products sector supports over 170,000 direct and indirect jobs in over 260 communities. To that end, the Ontario Forest Industries Association is on a mission to ensure that Ontario can maximize the full potential of its renewable forestry sector. I applaud and support their mission.

Unfortunately, employment in Ontario's forestry sector has been reduced by 52% since 2005. If we want

to see increased jobs in the forestry sector and ensure we meet MPP Arnott's goal, we are going to have to change policies in order to reverse that trend.

Ontario's forestry sector is a responsible steward of the environment and can assist the provincial government in reaching this ambitious goal if properly supported. I view this initiative as an opportunity to leverage positive partnerships with forestry companies rather than engender conflict and as an opportunity to listen to and show respect to northern communities rather than dictate to them, and an opportunity to share expertise, facts and evidence rather than remain silent in the face of the spread of misinformation.

Setting an aspirational goal of planting 150 million trees in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the province of Ontario in Confederation in 2017 is an opportunity to bring together municipalities, school boards, community organizations, the business community and the forestry sector. This is the Canadian way: to celebrate our abundance, to share in our bounty and yet still come together and strive to do better. We are blessed with abundant forestry resources in Ontario; we should be proud and make the most of it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my privilege, as always, to stand in this House and lend my voice to the debate. Today, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills has brought forward a motion to make the world a little greener and a little better. I appreciate the chance to be a part of the conversation about conservation and about planting more trees for our future.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is calling for a coordinated effort to reach the goal of planting 150 million trees as a project to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the province in Confederation in 2017. That's a great goal.

Ontario is a rich and beautiful province. We are fortunate here to have vast green spaces, sprawling forests and fields, and some of the most beautiful and colourful fall foliage in the world. We are fortunate in Ontario, and I believe we really do appreciate and value our wonderful access to nature.

In many cities across the province, we see municipalities leading the way when it comes to parks and green space. We know how important it is to have outdoor community spaces. We know that those spaces need trees, flowers, benches and beauty so that our communities can have a place to come together and grow together.

In Oshawa, we have planted over 2,000 trees in about a year. Last November, in recognition of Remembrance Day, Forests Ontario, Trees for Life, the region of Durham and the city of Oshawa hosted a day of tree planting along the lakefront trail on the site of the famous and former Camp-X. Just as a side note, for those of you unfamiliar with Camp-X, it is the site of a historical and super-secret military installation that served as a spy training centre during World War II.

But back to trees: On that day, members from the community were joined by veterans, active military per-

sonnel, volunteers and, of course, politicians. We planted 400 trees that day. The member from Burlington was there, too, in her role as PA to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. She and I were just remembering how fortunate it was that planting a tree warms the heart because, as we recall, it felt like the coldest day of the year. But it was a great community event.

The Royal Canadian Army Cadets were out that day planting like champions, and they were awesome, as they always are. It was a fitting initiative for them because their motto is "Acer acerpori," which is Latin for "As the maple, so the sapling."

All of us out that day were planting more than saplings; we were planting hope and health and a strong future. It was rainy, cold and grey, but we had a wonderful day because we were planting hopes and trees together as a community.

I think this motion and its stated goal is achievable. Communities across the province are planting trees. In Durham region, the Durham Five Million Trees Program is part of the Region of Durham Community Climate Change Local Action Plan. This program and others like it are prioritizing sustainable development and tree coverage, and addressing climate change.

1610

The city of Oshawa is committed to a green and healthy city. As in other municipalities, they've had to battle the emerald ash borer, an invasive beetle that kills all true ash trees. They've also had to react to the extensive tree damage after the ice storm, as have many communities across the Golden Horseshoe.

Durham Court Park is a park in Oshawa that was totally devastated by both the emerald ash borer and the ice storm; they teamed up to destroy this park. But our community partners and community members teamed up, and we've replanted and are again enjoying this park and will for years to come.

We can measure our own journeys, if we think about it, by the trees that we plant. I'm sure we can all remember a tree that we saw when we were young and the size of it, whether we planted it ourselves or it was a tree we knew as children. When we go back and look at it as adults, we see that those trees are now tall and strong. I think we can take that moment to measure our own growth—perhaps the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and his poetry have made me a little philosophical today, maybe a bit sappy—

Interjection: Ha ha.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —if you'll pardon the pun. Sorry. I fully intended to "leaf" tree jokes out of this and stick to the debate. I guess it's just not in my "nature."

My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh reminded us of Joyce Kilmer's well-appreciated poem: "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree." But it was Ogden Nash who shared:

I think that I shall never see

A billboard lovely as a tree.

Indeed, unless the billboards fall

I'll never see a tree at all.

This is a motion about what we value in our communities. If we value health, if we value hope, if we value growth and green and sustainability, and if we value the landscape we are leaving to our children, then we value and support the spirit of this motion. It is said, Mr. Speaker, that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago and the second-best time is now. So let's get planting. We support this motion and the goal of planting 150 million trees, and I personally look forward to planting my share. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to join this debate this afternoon in support of the resolution put forward by the member for Wellington–Halton Hills, not just because he's one of my favourite members of the Progressive Conservative caucus and a highly respected person—who, by the way, young as he looks, has been here since 1990—but because what our friend, whom we know as Ted Arnott, represents is moderation in politics, the ability to gather people of all political affiliations and no particular political affiliation together in support of initiatives he brings forward. In this, of course, he follows in the footsteps of his predecessor, Jack Johnson, also a good friend of mine from years gone by.

I might say as well—I will get around to the resolution itself—that I think that one of the reasons that Michael Chong, the federal member for Wellington–Halton Hills, was elected was that he has followed the pattern of the provincial member in being more moderate and less hardline in terms of his partisan political contributions.

Having said all that, I'm not voting in favour of this simply because Ted Arnott is bringing it forward; I'm doing so because it's also a very commendable resolution, and he should be justifiably proud, I think, of the county of Wellington's Green Legacy program and their representatives who are here today. This is truly an initiative that should be followed right across the province of Ontario. The suggestion in the resolution is that the Ministry of Natural Resources in fact do so in conjunction with a number of other people who are mentioned in his resolution.

Suffice to say, other members from the government side have said that the ministry is doing many, many things to plant trees in Ontario. But I think what separates this, a bit, is the fact that this is put forward as a manner in which to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Confederation. There will be a lot of hokey things done when you have those kinds of celebrations. We know that. We've observed them over the years. But I think this is something very tangible and something that will leave a legacy. It's not something that will happen and the next week it's past and everybody had a great time when it was done. It's something that will be done and will be for the benefit of future generations in the province of Ontario.

When an individual municipality—supported by the Federation of Agriculture in this case—brings forward a

suggestion of this kind and it's brought to this House by an elected member, I think it is commendable of support from all the parties. Everyone has mentioned how important trees are to the province, not simply the look of them—and they are beautiful in this province, and in the fall of the year the turning of the colours is spectacular indeed—but it's also the health benefits and environmental benefits that they bring globally.

We've seen some instances around the world where trees have, in fact, been removed rather than being planted. This initiative here ensures that we are going to have trees planted right across the province: an initiative, again, for which the county of Wellington deserves the credit, an initiative that could be emulated right across this province. I suspect that many municipalities, as well as the Ministry of Natural Resources, will be favourably inclined to be supportive of the initiative or the provisions of this particular initiative contained within this resolution.

I suspect, although I can never speak for all members of the Legislature, that we will see unanimous support for this. I'd be very surprised if there were not unanimous support. It's not because it lacks importance or it lacks flair; it's because it is something that will benefit everyone in the province in one way or another. People of all ages, people of all backgrounds, people of different philosophies: One thing that we do come together on are issues such as this for the importance of this province.

Once again, I want to thank—we're supposed to use the riding name, Wellington–Halton Hills, but Ted has been a long-time friend—my friend Ted Arnott for bringing this forward this afternoon. I certainly urge all members of the Legislature to be supportive of this initiative, and I'm confident they will be.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, just a quick point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to recognize my good friend and partner in agriculture in Ontario, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Don McCabe, who is in the members' west gallery today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm very pleased to join the debate today in support of my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Bill Walker: And a great member he is.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: And a great member he is. That's absolutely right.

To give you an example of how he's able to bring all stripes together and all different aspects together, I think it's important to share with you that he even got support from the David Suzuki Foundation. He received his support through Dr. Faisal Moola. I just want to read a segment of that statement:

"The David Suzuki Foundation supports the resolution by the honourable Ted Arnott, the member from

Wellington–Halton Hills, that the province of Ontario commit to a major tree-planting initiative in celebration of the 150th anniversary of our entry into Confederation.” I think this is a significant endorsement and I wanted to make sure we had read it in and got it on record as an example of the far-reaching impact that the member has.

I’d like to continue on by saying, as the PC critic for environment and cap and trade, I can’t think of a better way to celebrate this occasion than by planting 150 million trees across this province. It’s interesting because the Atlantic actually published, in February 2015, that the best technology for fighting climate change is trees. It references a new report that came out from Oxford University, where researchers say, “Our best hopes might not be so complex. In fact, they are two things we already know how to do: plant trees and improve the soil,” which I’m sure the president of the OFA can appreciate.

“Both techniques, said the report, are ‘no regrets.’ They’ll help the atmosphere no matter what, they’re comparatively low-cost, and they carry little additional risk. Specifically, the two techniques it recommends are afforestation—planting trees where there were none before—and biochar—improving the soil by burying a layer of dense charcoal.”

Speaker, I don’t have my glasses here today; I need longer arms.

“Between now and 2050”—thanks, Percy—“trees and charcoal are the ‘most promising’ technologies out there,” the report went on to conclude.

1620

There’s much we can say about the planting of trees, but I’d be remiss if I didn’t give credit where credit is due. I would like to make people aware of the fact that, leading by example and beginning back in 2004, Wellington county’s Green Legacy program plants over 150,000 trees across the county each year. It’s the perfect model to base this initiative on. Wellington’s model has become the largest municipal tree-planting program in North America. I congratulate the leaders in the gallery today for that.

I’d also be remiss if I didn’t recognize what we do locally. I think it’s important to celebrate what we do in our own ridings as well. The town of Saugeen Shores has introduced a wonderful program. It’s called “five for five”: a five-year tree-planting initiative that involves five different types of tree planting: in parks and trails, schools, country lanes, plantations, and green streets.

Also in the area, just south of Saugeen Shores, is a wonderful watershed called Pine River. It’s an initiative that began as a group of people around a kitchen table. They have worked closely for years, and they themselves have planted almost 219,000 trees. There’s so much to celebrate.

I would just like to acknowledge that we all can do something. Every year on our farm, we plant at least one species of tree. I encourage all people who can to go into their parks, go into their backyards and do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? The member for Perth–Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker. I am not asleep. I might appear to be asleep, but I’m not.

I certainly am pleased to rise today in support of this motion. I have the privilege of representing Wellington county alongside my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He’s an outstanding representative for his constituents, and he and his staff work tirelessly to advocate on the issues important to residents in Wellington–Halton Hills. I think that this resolution today goes to show why his constituents have such high regard for him and why they re-elect him time and time again.

This resolution is a thoughtful, creative and even visionary proposal. It recognizes the community-driven initiative taken by the county of Wellington and it builds on it. The year 2017 will mark an important milestone in Ontario’s history as we celebrate our 150th anniversary as a province in Confederation. What better way to celebrate this than to plant 150 million trees? I believe that this is a wonderful goal that will benefit our natural environment and help to bring communities together.

We need to look no further than Wellington county to see how this can be accomplished. In 2004, Wellington county developed a plan to plant 150,000 trees to celebrate the county’s 150-year anniversary. Through the Green Legacy program, the county has met and far exceeded that original goal. To date, almost two million trees have been planted throughout the county.

The Green Legacy program has been so successful that in 2010, it was recognized under the United Nations Billion Tree Campaign for its help in the fight against climate change.

Each year, the Green Legacy program does a special 1,000-tree planting in the home municipality of the Wellington county warden. On Monday, I was honoured to attend this tree planting in Minto with Warden George Bridge. He is an outstanding public servant, both in Minto and across the county. One thousand trees were planted at the municipal office outside of Harriston.

Perth–Wellington is well known for its environmental stewards and initiatives. The town of Minto has a unique program to offset the town’s carbon footprint. Last year, council and staff developed a plan to implement a one-cent-per-litre transfer from the town fuel budget and a volunteer donation of one cent per kilometre driven on municipal business. This money goes towards Minto’s Trees for Farms initiative, to be used exclusively for tree-planting programs.

An inspiration for the Minto plan was the Trees for Mapleton program. Trees for Mapleton is a community partnership with a goal of increasing the amount of forest coverage throughout the county. This program helps farmers adapt to climate change and aids in food production and durability by planting trees as windbreaks.

I would like to recognize Paul Day, the founder of Trees for Mapleton. He is a dedicated land steward and

has also served as a founding member and past chair of the Wellington County Stewardship Council, Trees for Peel and Wellington county's Green Legacy program.

I would also like to remember Ted Blowes. He was national chair of the Communities in Bloom program and a founder of environmental clubs and committees in Stratford. Each year, he helped to organize Green Week, and invited community members and students to take part in tree-planting activities.

I'm very pleased to support the motion introduced by my friend the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. Together, let's plant 150 million trees to mark our 150th anniversary as a province in 2017.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Wellington-Halton Hills. You have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my thanks to all members on all sides of this House who participated in this important debate this afternoon. I also want to, again, express my admiration for the county of Wellington for the outstanding leadership they've shown in launching their Green Legacy program and maintaining it on an ongoing basis, such that it has grown into the largest municipal tree-planting program in North America. They have shown us the way.

In our democracies around the world today, politicians are sometimes criticized for short-term thinking. It's often said of politicians that their vision extends only as far as the political cycle they're in at any given time, and then it ends. By voting for this motion today, in contrast, we are endorsing an idea that extends beyond the next election; in fact, it extends beyond our lifetimes.

My wife, Lisa, and I are proud parents of our three sons. They never cease to amaze us, and they're not alone. In fact, I have confidence that their entire generation will step forward in due course and change the world for the better. I have enormous faith in them. I believe that the future of humankind is in good hands because of the strength of the generation that will follow ours.

I've often said that I believe in the promise of the future, but I also believe that our generation, now, in our time, must do our part. Do we leave the next generation and the generations that follow an Earth that is habitable? Isn't that one of our most basic and fundamental responsibilities?

In the 25 years that I've been privileged to serve in this Legislature, I've raised countless issues in this House, but I consider the idea of taking the county of Wellington's Green Legacy program province-wide to be the initiative that could have the longest-lasting benefit if it's endorsed by the Legislature this afternoon and, in turn, embraced by the government. An Ontario green legacy program could be the legacy that all of us in this House can claim as our collective gift to the generations to come. I ask all members for their support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PATHWAYS TO POST-SECONDARY EXCELLENCE ACT (POST-SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL REPORT), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES VOIES DE L'EXCELLENCE AU NIVEAU POSTSECONDAIRE (RAPPORT SUR L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 73 standing in the name of Mr. Baker.

Mr. Baker has moved second reading of Bill 127, An Act to amend the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005 to require the Council to collect and publish information in respect of certain educational institutions.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to?

Mr. Yvan Baker: The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member's requesting that the bill be referred to finance and economic affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

POLICE CARDING PRACTICES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Singh has moved private member's notice of motion number 59.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

TREE PLANTING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Arnott has moved private member's notice of motion number 58.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 28, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the

Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

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Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is always my pleasure to rise in this House on behalf of the people I represent in London West. Today, I am pleased to join the debate on Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act.

Bill 115 amends the Representation Act, the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act in order to create 15 new ridings and increase the total number of seats in the Ontario Legislature from 107 to 122. It aligns southern Ontario provincial electoral boundaries with their federal counterparts but maintains the current riding boundaries in northern Ontario. The new riding boundaries will take effect following the first dissolution of the Legislature after November 30, 2016, and the redistributed ridings will be renamed to correspond with the federal names.

I want to congratulate the government on the title of this bill: the Electoral Boundaries Act. Unlike some of the grandiose titles we're used to seeing for most government bills, this title reflects quite accurately what the bill is about. But even despite the bill's narrow scope, it was interesting to read the comments from the minister and the parliamentary assistant when the bill was introduced. They made sweeping statements about this bill getting at "the heart of the most cherished values we have as citizens of a democratic society...." This bill does several things, but it's a bit of a stretch to see how it does that.

When she spoke to the bill, the minister focused on her government's commitment to ensuring fair representation. She mentioned, with some pride, the Liberal government's referendum on electoral reform that was undertaken in 2007, which did not, in the end, pass. She did not mention that the referendum was rejected by voters because the Liberals made almost no effort to explain and promote the benefits of proportional representation. She did not mention that with a majority Liberal government, they had a vested interest in seeing the referendum fail, which is why they put it to a referendum in the first place.

Sometimes it's hard not to be cynical when you see governments doing things like that. Ontarians who remember the 2007 provincial referendum will be watching the new prime minister, Justin Trudeau, very closely to see if he delivers on his pledge to introduce electoral reform and end first-past-the-post. First-past-the-post is a system that makes people feel that their votes don't count. It encourages negative and adversarial campaigning, and it produces legislatures that do not reflect the diversity of the people that legislators represent.

The clear solution to the flaws associated with first-past-the-post is proportional representation. Compared to

first-past-the-post, countries that use proportional voting systems, like Germany, Scotland and New Zealand, have much higher voter turnout and much higher numbers of women elected. They have government policies that are more reflective of the median voter and citizens who feel more satisfied with their democracy, even if their candidate or party is not elected. These are the results that were reported in a study of 36 democracies over a 55-year period.

We'll see what happens federally, but this kind of electoral reform does not appear imminent for Ontario. Instead, we have before us Bill 115, the purpose of which is to ensure representation by population. Now, rep-by-pop is a principle that is enshrined in our democracy since our nation was founded almost 150 years ago, so certainly I have no quarrel with the government for making these adjustments. Rep-by-pop requires that ridings be relatively similar in population size, so that every person's vote counts equally.

In the decade since riding boundaries were last redistributed in Ontario, there has been significant population growth, particularly in the GTA. To address this growth, Bill 115 creates 15 new ridings in southern Ontario and aligns those ridings with the federal electoral districts. This change will increase the total number of southern Ontario ridings from 96 to 111. Most of the new ridings will be in the GTA, in the rapidly growing communities of Toronto, Peel, York and Durham, as well as in Ottawa.

At the same time, Bill 115 recognizes the uniqueness of northern Ontario communities and the vast distances they cover. Instead of aligning northern boundaries with the federal riding map, the bill maintains current riding boundaries for the 11 northern ridings, compared to the 10 federal northern ridings.

Certainly, New Democrats support the changes that are proposed in this bill. We are fully supportive of ensuring that people who live in northern Ontario continue to have a strong voice in the provincial Legislature, and we hope that they will continue to be represented by fine MPPs like the member for Nickel Belt, the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the member for Timmins—James Bay and the member for Kenora—Rainy River.

While this particular bill is not controversial, the process of redrawing riding boundaries certainly can be. When I was a trustee on the Thames Valley District School Board, every municipal election we were required to approve a board motion to identify the wards that would be represented by each trustee. In 2006, the city of London had doubled the number of city wards from seven to 14, and with six London trustees for the city, there was a lot of discussion and debate about how to group the wards together to ensure similar population and keep families of schools intact. There were public presentations to the board about which wards should be grouped together, with strong views expressed about one grouping versus another.

In advance of this year's federal election, the country went through a redistribution process which changed

approximately 87% of federal ridings. In some areas these changes were highly contentious, leading to charges of outright gerrymandering.

Unlike some other ridings that were divided right down the middle that other MPPs who have spoken to this Legislature described, in London West, redistribution did not make a huge difference. A section of the riding north of the river and east of Wonderland Road was redrawn to London North Centre. Certainly I will miss this section of my riding if I have the honour of continuing to represent London West, especially my friends at 85 Walnut, the London-Middlesex housing high-rise, but on the whole, London West remains generally the same.

The only issue related to riding redistribution that was raised at my office concerned an area just outside my riding, the area south of Southdale Road. That is a part of the city that is experiencing a boom in new residential development; however, it is included in the boundaries of Elgin-Middlesex-London. I am sure that the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London provides fine representation, but some of his constituents contacted me to ask why they were not part of London West. They see their issues and their concerns more closely aligned with London West than with Elgin-Middlesex-London, which is perhaps an inevitable by-product of rep by pop.

When I was reading the comments that were made on the bill by the minister and the parliamentary assistant, I was struck by the fact that they spent almost as much time talking about what wasn't in the bill as what was. They talked about provisional registration of 16- and 17-year-olds, so that when they turn 18 they will already be on the voters' list and will receive a voter's card. They also talked about new rules to limit third-party advertising. Since this bill already amends the Election Act and the Election Finances Act, one wonders why these issues weren't addressed in Bill 115.

Frequently in this House, MPPs on this side of the floor raise concerns about the omnibus bills that are brought in by the government. Usually these bills include a poison pill wrapped inside some worthwhile and long-overdue changes. Bill 115, however, is an example where an omnibus bill would have made sense. But the Liberals decided not to go that way; they decided instead to do things one piece of legislation at a time.

Two of the issues that the minister says will be addressed in future legislation, the provisional registration of young voters and third-party advertising, were identified as recommendations in the 2014 post-election report of the Chief Electoral Officer.

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At this point, we have not been given any indication about what is happening to the other recommendations that were made by the Chief Electoral Officer. For example, the officer identified the need to do something to improve the accuracy of the voters list. When the voters list is not accurate, people don't get a voter's card in the mail. They don't go out to vote because they don't know where to vote, what time to vote, where the

advance polls are located and when the advance polls are open, and, if they can't go to the advance poll, how to get to the returning officer.

The Elections Ontario report on the 2014 election said that only 77% of electors had received a correct notice of registration card. That means that almost one quarter of electors did not receive a card. Even so, Elections Ontario described the 2014 list of electors as the most comprehensive and thorough in its history. Clearly, there is a lot of work that remains to be done to address the challenges with the accuracy of the voters list. If we are serious about improving democracy and increasing participation in the electoral process, taking steps to fix the voters list is one of the first things we should do.

We also have to work harder to remove barriers to voting. After the 2014 election, Elections Ontario commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct a survey of electors. The survey found that awareness of changes to the voting process was much lower among youth aged 18 to 24, aboriginal people, Ontarians abroad and Ontarians with disabilities, compared to other electors. This was the case even with regard to the changes that were specifically designed to help these special groups of electors vote.

Only 41% of youth aged 18 to 24 were aware that students could apply to designate a temporary residence so that they could vote while they were at school. Only 22% of electors with disabilities were aware of the option to have a home visit ballot. Only 36% of electors with disabilities were aware that they could vote independently and didn't need a proxy. Only 30% of electors abroad were aware that they did not need to register again.

We have to do a lot more to create awareness, particularly with groups of voters who may not be able to engage as easily with the electoral process, about the kinds of options that are available to them to make voting more accessible.

The Ipsos Reid survey following the 2014 election also found that aboriginal people and youth aged 18 to 24 were less satisfied with the information provided by Elections Ontario than other electors, and that 64% of aboriginal people and 71% of youth did not know what ID they needed to bring to the polls in order to vote. Both of these groups, aboriginal people and young people aged 18 to 24, were less likely to have received the notice of registration card, and more than half of the youth who were surveyed believed that they had to have a card in order to vote. Youth were also less receptive to traditional outreach methods and had low levels of recall for any of the messaging that was put out by Elections Ontario.

There was a very interesting op-ed in the Toronto Star earlier this week, and I hope other MPPs caught it. It was called "Politicians Take Note: Young People Aren't All the Same." The author pointed out that some youth are much less likely to turn out to vote than others, and that voter turnout "among young people without a high school diploma has decreased more than 50 percentage points." She argues that improving youth engagement "depends on reaching less educated youth." These are youth who are intimidated not just by the technical

aspects of voting but by how to decide who to vote for. They are alienated by party platforms that do not speak to their issues and that don't seem to care what matters to them. Finding a way to reach these youth and to engage them in the political process will be much more challenging than simply setting up the campus polling stations that we saw in the last federal election. These were, by the way, highly successful in increasing voter turnout among more educated young people.

In addition to these issues that I've already talked about, which represent missed opportunities, I think, that could have been included in the bill, another missed opportunity is clarifying the provisions in the Election Act around offering inducements and making promises to candidates. We know that there are various pieces of legislation that are being opened up in Bill 115, including the Election Act and the Election Finances Act, so this would have been an ideal opportunity to introduce some clarity.

In his report following the Sudbury by-election, the Chief Electoral Officer issued the unprecedented finding that an "apparent contravention of the Election Act" had taken place because of the actions of Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara. Now, Bill 115 was introduced after that report was tabled, after the Chief Electoral Officer brought that finding to the House, so certainly there was ample time for the Liberals to have looked at that report from the Chief Electoral Officer and looked at the provisions of the Election Act, the Election Finances Act, and tried to figure out a way that some of the concerns that had been raised during that whole Sudbury by-election process could have been addressed in this bill. It would have been, as I said, an ideal time to review and strengthen the bribery sections of the Election Act.

Speaker, strengthening democracy and improving voter participation requires, first and foremost, that we ensure the integrity of the voting process. The Chief Electoral Officer's report and the OPP charges that were subsequently laid against Gerry Lougheed have compromised people's trust in the electoral system. These are the kind of things that undermine democracy and weaken people's faith in the democratic process. It will take a lot more to restore the confidence of Ontarians in the integrity of the electoral process than the redistribution of provincial ridings that is set out in Bill 115.

That said, Bill 115, aligning provincial boundaries with federal riding boundaries, makes some sense. Certainly, if we can address some of the gaps in the legislation that I pointed out today, if we can make some meaningful changes to encourage more people to participate in the electoral process—in particular more young people, less-educated young people, First Nations people, people with disabilities, people who have historically experienced barriers to voting—then we will have a much stronger bill and a much more democratic Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened very carefully to the remarks from the member for London West. She had some good points to make here.

But the main thing about this bill is that we are aligning our provincial boundaries to mirror the federal boundaries that recently changed—with one exception, of course. In the north, we're going to keep 11 seats instead of 10. That's a commitment our government made a long time ago to make sure that the north is represented and that we have 11 members in this Legislature from northern Ontario.

Of course, the population across Ontario has grown quite a bit, so we're following the number of ridings across Ontario that the federal government has, after doing some consultation and outreach to the community. This bill has a long way to go still, but the thrust of the bill is to follow the federal boundaries but to keep one extra seat in the north.

Beyond that, we certainly support the idea of representation by population. We need new members, and we'll have new members here after the next election in 2018.

Also, this bill still goes to committee after second reading debate here; amendments are made and proposed. This is not etched in concrete. I mean, if the opposition members have some good amendments they want to make to the bill, we can do that at committee, or even the government, if they wanted to make some changes to the bill, can do that as well. We always have committee meetings on bills. Discussions take place, public hearings are held, and then we discuss it amongst the committee members and bring it back up here for third reading debate. We are basically doing what the federal government is doing across Canada, realizing that there are more people. The member mentioned the GTA, the greater Toronto area; the population has just exploded in that area, and we want to make sure that the people there are represented with more ridings. I appreciate the comments, and hopefully we will get this bill to committee at some point in time.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am honoured to join in the debate. I want to acknowledge my colleague's comments with respect to this bill, and particularly I think it's important to talk about—while we're talking about changing the electoral boundaries, it also raises the question around what we can do to encourage more participation. The member from London brought up issues around encouraging youth to vote more.

I think one of the most important things we can do as legislators is to create a climate to encourage more participation in our democracy. I think it's deeply troubling that we see the type of voter turnouts that we see. It is incumbent upon us as members of this House to do everything possible to ensure that it's easier to vote and that people are more encouraged to vote. We need to come up with strategies around that, particularly with the traditional groups that aren't voting as often, and youth is one of those particular groups.

We need to ensure that access is not a barrier to voting, that people don't vote because it's just simply difficult to vote. We have seen in this previous election

that having an increased number of advance voting days allowed for more voter turnout. That was a positive initiative, but we need to do more to target, specifically, young people, whether that's through making it easier to vote through finding better mechanisms for voting, allowing more awareness around the benefit of voting, reaching out through various initiatives, perhaps non-profit organizations that encourage voter participation. I think it's essential. If we talk about increasing the number of members in this province, we also need to look at how we can increase the participation from our citizens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I think that the strength of our democracy is at the heart of the fair and inclusive society that we're so proud to call Ontario. Today, we're seeking to proceed with proposals that would ensure Ontarians are represented fairly in this Legislature.

Coming from a growth riding, I understand how important it is for us to have effective representation that's proportional by population. I think that we need to have these new boundaries come into play so that we can fairly represent and have equal areas across the province. We've seen the ridings in Brampton grow over the last few years, so much that sometimes it becomes difficult to manage all of the constituents that you have, so it would be so much better if we could have fair, proportionate boundaries for everybody.

Representation by population is a core democratic principle. We are adjusting Ontario's provincial boundaries in light of our population shifts and growth to ensure that Ontarians are represented fairly and effectively. This means that we'll be adding 15 new ridings in southern Ontario based on the new federal boundaries, which would increase the number from 96 to 111. However, we would maintain the existing 11 provincial ridings in northern Ontario to maintain fair representation in northern Ontario.

As we saw in the federal election this week, we still had large ridings to cover. I know I was out canvassing quite a bit for our local representatives and our local candidates, and covering ground was—even with a 78-day campaign, it wasn't easy to cover as much ground as we have.

The population in some of these areas continues to grow, so we need to take that into consideration when we follow through on having the same riding representations as we do federally. It also makes it easier for our constituents. I come from a riding where, right now, I'm Brampton-Springdale, whereas my federal counterpart is Brampton North, and there was already confusion with us going out to canvass. They need to be aligned with the federal boundaries. It is the best thing, and it's in the best interests of us and our constituents.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I keep imagining that there's going to be somebody else from my caucus getting up.

My riding actually changed as well. Many of the constituents who are in the new riding are actually very upset. They feel they weren't consulted. They felt that they were part of a community, and now the president of the EDA, the federal riding association, is in fact not in the riding. She's going to stay on as president, but I think it does sometimes create difficulty. So I think there has to be a lot of thought put into it.

I don't know that there is any way to have public engagement, necessarily, in terms of riding boundary changes, but I definitely was a little surprised at the fact that Thornhill riding, the way it exists now provincially, not federally, goes along Steeles to 404, along Highway 7 from the east to Highway 400—everybody can imagine that—and then dips up and has this extra little piece north of Highway 7. I would have imagined, if they were cutting the riding down, that they would have taken the piece that's on the north side of the highway and kept it a perfect rectangle. Instead, they lopped off a part, so it's still an oddly shaped riding, crossing between communities.

There's obviously a lot more to it than just looking at one riding. I think they had to look at the entire area, and you can't just take a piece of one riding to make that riding maybe work perfectly; you have to also look at all the surrounding ridings. But as my colleague just said, I think that we as parliamentarians have to recognize that our voices do get a bit diminished when there are more of us in the House. Perhaps there will be more people to speak on certain things, and that's less work for us, but then there will be fewer opportunities for us as well.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: They'll all be New Democrats.

Mrs. Gila Martow: All the new ones will be New Democrat—wishes thinking.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for London West. You have two minutes.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, the member from Brampton-Springdale and the member from Thornhill for offering some thoughts on the remarks I made on Bill 115.

I was encouraged by the comment by the member for Scarborough Southwest, in his acknowledgment that they do have a long way to go to achieve true and meaningful electoral reform. Certainly, as I said in my comments, and others have noted, representation by population is a core value of a democratic society and is important, but there is so much more that we need to do to strengthen our democracy.

I liked the comments by the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton, when he talked about the need for targeted initiatives to encourage more participation among voters, particularly among youth. Perhaps I didn't say enough about the remarks that were made by the minister and the parliamentary assistant about the coming provisional registration initiative, because that is certainly a useful tool to create a habit of democracy among young people: getting 16- and 17-year-olds excited about the opportuni-

ity to vote; getting them to start thinking about the issues that matter to them and which party they might be interested in supporting; and just preparing them to become citizens of our democracy, to participate in our electoral process and to choose the future they want by marking an X on their ballot.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It is my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act, and participate in second reading debate this afternoon. I will be sharing my time with the members from Davenport, Eglinton–Lawrence and Trinity–Spadina—so a team effort, for sure.

I think there has been quite a bit of discussion today—good discussion—about what this act is really about in terms of the changes to boundaries. I think the principle of representation by population is something we're hearing from all sides. Of course, we just had the federal election, so now it is time for the province to consider moving forward with adopting those boundaries, for the most part, with the exception in the North, as other members have talked about.

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I think the member for Brampton–Springdale hit it on the head in her remarks: There's going to be confusion for a while, because now we have these new federal boundaries, but, in Ontario, we are still operating under the current boundaries. However, it will take time to get ready for that official change in 2018.

In my riding of Pickering–Scarborough East, to be frank, I kind of like it the way it is. I have a community in the very east end of Toronto and a community in the very west side of Durham. People go back and forth all the time. There are now shared transit systems. People live and shop and worship in both parts of the riding. I've really enjoyed and will continue to enjoy serving that community until the boundaries change. At an emotional level, it's a little hard for me to see the riding split in two.

I know, in other cases, such as in the case of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, her riding is splitting potentially in four. She has a bigger dispersement of her riding. There will be a transition period. How we all communicate that is going to be very important as we go forward.

One part I wanted to touch on briefly—and it was just mentioned in the wrap-up from the NDP—is the potential with this bill to engage younger people earlier. I'm sensing a consensus around how important that is, Speaker. I think engagement of people sooner in the process is, hopefully, going to continue to increase voter turnout of our young people.

This provincial registration provision in the act, that will allow 16- and 17-year-olds to become more engaged, I think, is very, very important. Hopefully, it will make it easier for them to vote when they do turn 18 and, hopefully, build that greater tie between themselves as youth and the election process.

I have two kids who went off to college and university this fall. Although they're 17—they're not turning 18

until next month—they really could feel the on-campus effort this year to get the youth vote out. They were provided with all kinds of opportunities to vote on campus, to meet with candidates, and the outreach was quite incredible. This was at McMaster University, where my daughter is, and at Mohawk College, where my son is. Unfortunately, they couldn't vote, because their birthday is not until December, but they certainly became aware.

There are my 17-year-olds getting engaged already, even though they couldn't vote. So when the registration provision of this bill comes forward, they will already be aware because there has been such tremendous outreach at our colleges and universities in Ontario, and I think that's fantastic. I'm having conversations with them about what it means to vote, and what it means to our democracy.

I think this is a very important piece of this bill. I know there are other important provisions around election advertising and so on, and potentially changing the fixed date of elections.

I know that these riding changes are important to our democracy. I know, even in my own riding, that I'm very attached to, there's a certain logic about splitting Pickering–Scarborough East into Scarborough–Rouge Park and Pickering–Uxbridge, based on regional government boundaries and based on population growth. It absolutely makes sense.

I think the challenge for all of us is just to get ready for that, and I look forward to this bill going forward to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm pleased to rise today and speak about the importance of Bill 115.

We have heard that the strength of our democracy is at the heart of the fair and inclusive society we are so proud of here in Ontario, and nothing could be more true. In fact, democracy is at the heart of our province and our country. Whether you're a Canadian here in Ontario or in any other province across this great country of ours, fair representation in a democracy is what we all believe in, and it's a value that exists in my riding of Davenport too.

The simple act of voting, which was once a privilege given only to those affluent enough to own land or pay taxes, has become a right of citizenship enjoyed by Canadians. With this recent federal election, we saw an increase in voter turnout: 68.5%, a number we hadn't seen since 1993.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the newly elected MP for Davenport, Julie Dzerowicz, and thank the outgoing MP, Andrew Cash, for his years of service and for serving the constituents of Davenport.

Our citizens see voting not only as a treasured right but also as a civic obligation, a way of acting on our commitment to democratic principles and protecting our stake in our country's political life. Representation by population is a core democratic principle. Through Bill

115, we are proposing to adjust Ontario's provincial boundaries in light of our population shifts and growth to ensure that Ontarians are represented fairly and effectively. This means adding 15 new ridings in southern Ontario, based on the new federal boundaries, which would increase the number from 96 to 111. The bill would maintain the existing 11 provincial ridings in northern Ontario. The new federal boundaries were put in place for the recent federal election. I know that we are taking steps to ensure that the new boundaries are in place for the next scheduled provincial election in 2018.

Speaker, I've met so many Canadians, Ontarians and amazing people in Davenport, all from different walks of life, various backgrounds, and each having unique values. But the one value I've noticed they share in common is the desire for democracy and fair representation. I know that with the recent federal election, my office assisted a number of new Canadians to this country to register and vote for the first time in this election. I know that our government recognizes the importance of giving every man and woman from all backgrounds the chance to be heard through their right to vote. Whether you're a new immigrant to Ontario or a second- or third-generation Canadian, it means something to belong to a democracy and to be fairly represented. That's why I'm pleased to stand up in the House today and support this bill. Ontario should be represented fairly in our Legislature, and the Electoral Boundaries Act would do just that.

I remember, when I was seeking to get elected to this House, how many doors I knocked on in Davenport where my constituents told me personally that they value the right to participate in our democracy and the right to vote. They know it's not a right that exists in every country in the world but exists here in Ontario and Canada, and they are proud that it does. That's why I gladly lend my support to this bill and its initiative in expanding the voice of Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thanks, Speaker. Speaking to Bill 115, we had some discussions about electoral reform at one point. I said that there's one country where they have the perfect system. Maybe we should have a parliamentary trip there. They claim to have the best system. That's North Korea. North Korea claims to have the perfect democracy. They've made the system bullet-proof—no pun intended.

The search for this elusive dream of the perfect boundaries and the perfect system—you're never going to find it. But I think, over the years, we've tried to make it as reasonable as possible. I think that the Ontario electoral boundaries, or the federal, and the systems of voting are pretty darn good. I know some of them always say, "In New Zealand, they've got a great system," and they always say, "Sweden has a fantastic system." Well, none of these systems are perfect. We've got a pretty good one here. There are a lot of parts that could be fixed, and that's what I think we should be doing: con-

tinue to improve it. That's where people would appreciate the fixing of the system that we have. To give them some utopia, again, as I said, there's only one utopia, and we don't want to go there.

It's interesting to note that in my own riding of Eglinton-Lawrence, we had a 72% turnout—a really high turnout. People were—I've never seen them so excited to vote. Really, in all my years provincially, municipally or federally, this was an all-time high of an enthusiasm on the part of everybody of all ages. Young people, they're just—again, I've never seen them so engaged, which was great to see.

Also, in terms of the changes that are made, one of the things that really drives me crazy—and some of you have served provincially and municipally—is that they change the polling stations all the time. This drives people crazy. So you have the municipal polling station here, and then the provincials are here, and then the federal is totally different. Then the provincial polling stations go according to accessibility rules, while the feds don't have any accessibility rules. Is it that difficult in this age of computers to have the same polling stations, God forbid, for all three elections so that people would know we go there to the local church to vote, to the local school to vote?

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Then you've got the situation in the schools this election. We had one in a Toronto community housing building. The doors were locked because they have to be locked. You can't get in. People going to vote in the morning—they couldn't get in all day. We had to phone and say, "Please, have someone stand at the door." "Oh, we don't have enough staff to open the doors." Anyway, this kind of nonsense really frustrates people, and it shouldn't be.

My pet peeve, I'll tell you—those stupid voting cards. Okay? I go crazy every time I see the voting cards. You can't read them. They're so small, the writing of where—right, Tim? You see the writing—I can't see. Where do I go to vote? A lot of seniors—and the writing is so small, the advance poll writing is so small, and then, as you know, now in the mail all you get is that junk mail with the cards. This card comes in with all the other junk mail. It all goes in the garbage. The poor voter gets so frustrated. I go and say, "Do you want to vote?" He says, "Well, I don't have the card. I lost the card."

How many thousands of people lose those stupid cards that are just impossible to read, or go to the wrong address? The person's moved. The husband gets the card; the wife doesn't get the card. Then the kids don't get the card; the mother gets the card. A person who's been living in a house for 30 or 40 years doesn't get a card; the person who just moved in has a card. I mean, those voting cards are a disaster, always have been—municipally, federally, provincially. You think these people we pay big money to—Elections Ontario and Elections Canada, can they figure out the simple voting card, what to do to fix that and to have polling stations?

In polling stations federally, this is the other thing that happened. I don't know if it happened in your ridings.

There were no signs to tell you where the polling station was. The signs were inside the polling station. I said, "What good are they inside the polling station? You can't afford a little Coroplast sign to put on the front lawn of the school to say you vote in there?" "No, we can't do that. The school won't allow signs on the property." This is the kind of nonsense—you know, before we come up with our utopian system of the best way to vote, let's just fix the basics first of all.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How about an updated voters list?

Mr. Mike Colle: Oh, the voters list. There's no such thing. You might as well work door-to-door without lists, because the lists will drive you crazy, will drive the volunteers crazy, and then the people will say, "My name isn't on the list. How do I get on the list?" "Well, you've got to email now. Go to your computer." And the person says, "I don't have a computer. How do I get on the list?" Then you go on voicemail hell, trying to get back and forth, "Who do I call? Where do I go?"

Anyway, let's fix the fundamentals. I know that's not sexy and it doesn't make columns in the *Globe* or *Toronto Star*. The talking heads on CBC don't talk about this kind of stuff, because most of them have never done the practical door-to-door stuff like we have, to see the pain and agony of ordinary people trying to vote. Let's fix the fundamentals before we go ahead and find this utopian system that exists in only one country, and we don't want to go there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I'm very happy to speak to this bill as this bill is a very important bill. It embraces the democratic system that we all enjoy here.

As an immigrant, you can only imagine how excited I was when I first became a Canadian citizen. This past summer, one of the activities was to go to the CNE to attend their annual swearing-in ceremony where I saw many new Canadians. The first thing they said to me after they were sworn in was, "I'm so happy I can vote this October."

I'm very pleased to be able to debate this bill, and that our government is actually moving forward with the boundary changes.

To me, there are three things that I want to bring up for the boundary change act. First of all, it's necessary. It's necessary where now we have the federal boundaries changed and in my riding it's very significant. The downtown, we used to have two ridings: Trinity-Spadina and Toronto Centre at the federal level. Now we have three ridings: University-Rosedale, Spadina-Fort York and Toronto Centre.

I have to say that I was worried, at first, how people would understand and not be confused about these new boundaries. For example, in my riding Chinatown now gets cut in half by Dundas Street. North of Dundas goes to University-Rosedale and south of Dundas goes to Spadina-Fort York. I was honestly quite worried that people wouldn't have a chance to get informed where

they are going to be voting and who they would be voting for.

I have to say that observing the whole period of 78 days of campaigning, I'm quite pleased that the candidates had done an excellent job of informing of the new boundary changes, where we see that overall, voter turnout has gone up. I'm quite proud of the turnout in my riding. Both ridings had well exceeded 70%, which we haven't seen in a long while.

The second thing is that it is necessary to address the population growth of the downtown core. We've all seen the buildup and all the construction going on in the city of Toronto and in my riding, whether it's CityPlace, whether it's Liberty Village, whether it's parts of College Park. We can't go by a major street without seeing cranes and construction taking place. So this is necessary to make sure that residents are fairly represented and that they receive quality service from their elected officials.

To be honest, people see politicians attending events all the time and they say to us, "You work very hard," but we know, in fact, our staff works very hard, especially at the constituency level. In the areas where we have faced tremendous growth, the demand for service has grown so much. I think it's necessary, and I think staff at the constituency office will be glad to hear of boundary changes, especially for my area.

Third, I think the youth engagement piece is very important. I want to share with the House a little story. There was an international student first, and then he became a permanent resident. I think it was the week before October 19, he got his citizenship. He beat the registration deadline by two hours. He was so excited that he could vote for the first time during this election. So I want to see this kind of enthusiasm amongst the young voters when it comes to voicing their opinion via ballot.

I share with the member from Eglinton-Lawrence some of the frustrations and challenges, I will say, that we still see at the operation portion of the election. The turnover in my riding is about 10% every year. So we have 10% of new residents in the riding. So to reconcile their list with the new voters and register the new voters is a challenge. I hope to see some innovative new ways to capture that so everyone can go through a very smooth voting process on election day.

I'm very happy to debate this bill, and I'll be supporting this bill wholeheartedly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that we're all very committed to seeing voter engagement. This subject sort of has evolved to getting voters engaged when we were really initially focused on the actual changes in the electoral districts. But that is part of the engagement: people knowing, number one, what riding they're in. I think we all experience here, especially in the more urban ridings, where there are so many ridings and they're so close together that people are quite shocked that from one block to another block, they're in a different riding—they're quite taken aback.

1720

We would like everybody to be very engaged, to want to vote and understand not just who their MPP or their MP is but what that person is doing. With social media, it's certainly making our lives more interesting—"May you live in interesting times," and all that—in terms of getting the voters to be a little bit engaged not just with us and what we're doing here in the Legislature—and yes, it's late on a Thursday. People are wondering how the schedules are done. I wonder if people outside of Queen's Park understand what it is we are doing in here, debating and not going to events, which is what they see on social media.

People want to know that they can vote. I totally agree with the member opposite about the size of printing. As an optometrist, I struggle with this all the time. We demand bilingual literature. We often demand things to be available for people who have all kinds of accessibility difficulties. Vision: All we have to do is have a better font, not dark grey on light grey. Maybe that's something we can be debating next week, another time, when we're done debating electoral reform and boundary changes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am pleased to rise and respond to some of the remarks that were offered by the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence and the member for Trinity—Spadina.

Interesting, Speaker, that most of the comments that were offered actually didn't refer to the bill. They referred to what is coming next after this bill. I really appreciated the passion that was shown by the member for Eglinton—Lawrence and his desire to fix that voters list and do something about those—

Mr. Mike Colle: Frustration. It's frustration.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Yes, his frustration about voter registration cards. I hope he takes that passion with him as the Liberal government looks to develop the next step of its electoral reform process.

Similarly, the Minister of Community and Social Services—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Not community and social services.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Oh, sorry. It's children and youth services. Sorry. The Minister of Children and Youth Services spoke about the importance of engaging youth and the value of provisional registration. I fully agree, Speaker, but this bill doesn't say a thing about engaging youth—unless perhaps there will be some engagement by the tweaking of the electoral boundaries, but I doubt it, frankly. We'll have to wait until the next step, until we see some action on this recommendation for provisional registration that was brought by the Chief Electoral Officer.

All of the things that we've been discussing today are great. Unfortunately, as a result of this debate, we'll only be able to move ahead on one of them, and that is the boundary changes. It sounds like there is some consensus, so I look forward to seeing that bill move forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: With regard to the recent election outcome, I would simply say, "Free at last. Free at last. Thank God almighty, we are free at last."

Speaker, Ontario had to fight for the extra 15 seats coming to the province of Ontario because the outgoing government was going to extend a disproportionate number of extra seats to Alberta. We had to fight for those seats.

This, I'm sorry to say, is part of the outgoing government's very strategic decisions and programs and initiatives to disenfranchise more and more voters, whether it's the elimination of the long-form census; whether it's, for example, increasing the PR citizenship requirement time from three years to four years; whether it's reducing the number of immigrants from 50,000 to 5,000 regarding bringing parents; whether it's the elimination of more than a million expatriate Canadians from the voters list; whether it's by way of removing immigration physicians who spoke Gujarati, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi, Farsi, Hindi and Tamil or, for example, choosing immigrants based on religious criteria as opposed to their human plight. Even, by the way, some of you might have seen some of the information: In British Columbia—google it now if you don't believe me—there were ballots that were preprinted, pre-selected, for Tory candidates that were released in British Columbia—no doubt a printing error.

Now, whether these are all random acts of kindness or whether these are actually part of some—let's call it what it is—American strategic plan to disenfranchise voters, to go with the old-stock Canadians and not the others who may come subsequently, that, Speaker, I leave to you.

This electoral boundary issue is very important. Ontario had to fight for those 15 seats, and we welcome them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We saw an example of what they term the "Harper derangement syndrome" just now. I'd say to my colleague from Etobicoke: Doctor, heal thyself. That was a bit over the top. I'd put the tinfoil hat back in the desk, and we'll go back to debate here.

Let me just say this: I sense my friends across the floor are excited about the election results from Monday—just my guess, Speaker. When you're talking to the new Prime Minister Trudeau, tell him, "Don't change the electoral system in this great country, Canada." Many of you celebrated how Canada—and I do, too, as a grandson of immigrants—attracts people from across the world. We're to be emulated, not tossed aside to try, as my friend from Eglinton—Lawrence suggested, the latest model du jour, whether it be Sweden or New Zealand or, as he made a joke, North Korea. I'm with him. We've got a great system right here. Why would you toss it out the window? Why is Canada the envy of the world? This is part of it.

Whatever you do, tell the Prime Minister, "Do not go to some sort of mixed-member proportional or someplace

where members are off of a list to get elected." I know my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence; I see him working, when I'm in Toronto, in the riding. He's there, and that's why he has been re-elected many times. I know my new colleagues are back in their ridings, because you're accountable. The member from Huron-Bruce is driving three hours now home tonight after debate because she wants to be back in her riding tonight, to be in her office tomorrow morning with constituents.

If somebody gets appointed from a list, they're going to do that? Are you kidding me? All they're going to care about is being as close as possible to the leader and those around him. That's not healthy for our democratic system. There is nothing like the discipline of having to go back home to face the voters, to be in the grocery store, the gas station, your church, your synagogue—whatever, Speaker—to say, "This is how I voted, and talk to me." That is not going to happen when you come off a list.

Keep Canada strong and free: direct representation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. You have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, I think we had a great, passionate discussion this afternoon about this bill. We had seven MPPs speak to this, and I want to acknowledge their contributions: the members from Davenport, Eglinton-Lawrence to my right, Trinity-Spadina, Thornhill, London West, Etobicoke North and Niagara West-Glanbrook. I think everyone's on the same page that we need to move this bill forward, and I heard some other suggestions, too, that I think are definitely worthy of consideration.

Speaker, one thing I'd like to do, if I may, during this last minute of my time is to thank the outgoing member for Pickering-Scarborough East, the Conservative member, Cornelius Chisu, whom I've worked with for four years. He is a professional, kind, co-operative person and I really enjoyed working with him on many, many non-partisan events in our community. Mr. Chisu, until, I think, Minister O'Toole came along, was the only federal member with active service in Afghanistan. He speaks seven languages. He's an engineer. He has a great background and he's a great Canadian. I thank him for his service to our country and to the riding of Pickering-Scarborough East.

I'd also like, of course, to congratulate the two new members in my riding, which has split, as I outlined earlier. On the Scarborough-Rouge Park side, we have Gary Anandasangaree. He is our new MP for that riding. In Pickering-Uxbridge, we have Jennifer O'Connell, the former deputy mayor for the city of Pickering and a regional councillor. I'm really looking forward to working with both of them as we go forward, and again would like to thank MP Chisu for his work in our riding. I wish him much health and happiness as he goes forward, and I thank all the members for participating in this debate.

1730

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 115, Electoral Boundaries Act, 2015. I want to say I'm supporting this because anytime—I want to be encouraging—the government members are carrying out a Mike Harris PC government policy, I want to congratulate them. It's good to see. You've come around. You're coming around. It's all right.

My colleagues—some who have been here a bit longer than others—will remember this was actually brought in in 1996. At the time, it was called the Fewer Politicians Act of 1996.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, no. We matched the federal boundaries; you're increasing politicians by this act. We reduced them; it's true. We campaigned on that, if you remember—saved taxpayers money, made sure the provincial boundaries were the same as the federal boundaries. You're keeping the Mike Harris principle intact of matching the federal boundaries, which I appreciate and I commend you for it. I'm just trying to pay you a compliment, I say to my colleague across the floor.

Bill 81, Fewer Politicians Act, 1996: "An Act to reduce the number of members of the Legislative Assembly by making the number and boundaries of provincial electoral districts identical to those of their federal counterparts and to make consequential amendments to statutes concerning electoral representation."

I thought this made a lot of sense. I ran on it. It always seemed to me to be sensible. I have heard a number of you use these arguments here this evening as well, that it just seems sensible and transparent to voters and those that we work with, whether stakeholders, municipal leaders etc., to have the same boundaries provincially as we do federally. It also eliminates the ugly temptation, over time, for our politicians to gerrymander ridings. It takes that temptation away altogether. That's why I thought it was a good idea then, and I think it's a good idea today.

In 1955, there was actually a similar number of seats both provincially and federally. The number of those in the assembly resembled the number of representatives from Ontario who took their seats in Parliament. Just after 1955, the federal representation of Ontario increased by 14 seats, but paradoxically, Ontario added 40 new members. So 1955 was probably the Leslie Frost government. If the member from York Centre were here, I could ask him directly if that was the case or not, but it was, I believe, the Frost government. I'm not sure what the reasons were at the particular time, but it caused a phenomenon to occur post-1955 where there were more provincial members than there were federal members.

Now, I'd probably agree, and I think that my colleagues here would say the same—and we'd have a fun debate with our federal colleagues—I think provincial members work harder. There are more issues that are more pertinent to the everyday life of an MPP than an MP when you're in—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Pardon me?

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: We do get paid less. We don't have the same retirement program that the federal members do, either.

Mr. Mike Colle: That's another Mike Harris bill.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think you voted for it, though. I think you voted for that one.

Nonetheless, I do think—I know there are federal members who work extremely hard. They have a lot of travel; they do a lot of international travel and such, but I think in terms of the work that's relevant and front facing to average folks—education, health care, transportation, policing, the environment—

Mr. Robert Bailey: WSIB.

Mr. Tim Hudak: WSIB. My colleague from Sarnia-Lambton says that a lot of our constituency work is WSIB cases, sadly.

Interjection: FRO.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The FRO, the Family Responsibility Office.

I would put the hours of work of an MPP and his or her staff on constituency matters at the federal level. Nonetheless, my colleague from St. Catharines pointed out there's a difference in pay and benefits, but that's not the debate today. But I think we'd all agree there are demands on MPPs unlike their federal cousins.

Nonetheless, I don't think that argues to increase the number of MPPs beyond federal representation. I still think that matching boundaries trumps other considerations, and I'm pleased to see that continue.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Even in the North, Tim?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Pardon me?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Even in the North?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, we do have the one additional seat in the North. I know my colleague from Windsor asked me about that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would urge the speaker to address the Chair.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am, like I said, supporting the bill, but you're right.

So in 2003, the representation order reduced the number of federal electoral boundaries to 10 from 11 and increased the number of electoral districts in southern Ontario from 92 to 96.

So while the original act would have matched the federal northern boundaries for the 2007 election campaign, Premier McGuinty at the time brought in the Representation Act of 2005. That moved us from 106 to 107 ridings, including an additional northern riding.

I think the principle is clear: It's appropriate, fair, transparent and honest to match those federal boundaries. This act does not, as far as I know, make it automatic. It means that every time the federal boundaries change, we have to come back and debate the same principles again, and I think, in all likelihood, past that—but it would be better, I think, if it was an automatic result.

What happened back in 1996 when this bill was brought in? It reduced the number of MPPs and their staff by 27 members. That means that their expenses

were reduced as well. It saved about \$11 million each and every year.

I supported that bill. I look back on the debate. John Baird, who, I think, by the way, was one of the most impactful foreign affairs ministers in my lifetime—I'm proud to count him as a friend. I'm glad to see he's doing well in the real world of the private sector now. John Baird at the time said, "Rather, we believe that if we're going to get ourselves out of the hole we're in with respect to deficits, we have to lead by example. We have to say that the leadership is going to start with a smaller cabinet and a smaller Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and that's very, very important."

I can't remember what the two opposition parties did at the time. I think they may have opposed that act. I'm not sure.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Say it ain't so.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let's look back. My colleague from the NDP said, "Say it ain't so." What do you guess? Do you think the NDP supported or voted against?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I wasn't here.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You were, basically, maybe an early college student at the time, I think, in 1996.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the speaker again: no cross-dialogue. Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Does the Speaker disagree?

Len Wood, an NDP member, called it a silly bill.

Liberal Mario Sergio—remember Mario Sergio? A big shock of curly hair on his head—a young fellow back in 1996.

Hon. Mario Sergio: You remember my curly hair?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I do. I admired it. I was jealous. I'm never going to have that.

Hon. Mario Sergio: There you go.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Mr. Sergio said, "How can we deliver"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We've had a great day, and all this cross-talk did not exist. I did not have to intervene. So can we finish the day nicely?

Hon. Mario Sergio: We never had a chance, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to behave until 6 o'clock. After that, you'll be free.

Carry on. I'd ask you to keep it to the Chair.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Certainly, Speaker. And in defence of my colleagues, I am provoking them. I will admit it.

Mr. Sergio at the time said, "How can we deliver better representation and better services when you are diminishing exactly that?"

Liberal MPP Jim Bradley, the member for St. Catharines—you'll find this one interesting—said, "I know one of the concerns he would have is that there be a sufficient number of members in the Legislature to prevent the privatization of the LCBO."

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, that's true.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —talking at the time. "Because he would know, as others know, that the LCBO provides a safe, secure and controlled way of retailing alcoholic beverages in this province...."

Some things don't change. I bet the member would probably say similar things today.

NDP member David Cooke, Windsor-Riverside: "I intend to vote against this bill because I stand firm with my Liberal colleagues in saying that the Chrétien government really messed up these boundaries. I had to say that." He said, "I think it is fundamentally wrong" to match the federal boundaries.

Jean-Marc Lalonde: "It's impossible to try and compare the MPPs and the MPs. That's impossible." Strong language here from Monsieur Lalonde. "Federal MPs have very little to look" out for in a rural area. "Provincial matters are everything."

PC member Derwyn Shea—the late Rev. Derwyn Shea, an honourable member, I think, very well liked and respected on all sides of the floor—said, "In addition to the dollar savings and so forth that this bill represents—and that's not unimportant to the taxpayers of this province—it's more important that we understand the politics of our ridings and who represents whom. The fact is that in my riding, I have a total of 14 politicians. The people in the community are getting sick and tired of not knowing who represents what area any longer. Neighbourhoods are being divided, and that's most inappropriate."

"This bill tries to give some consistency. It says an area is an area, and within that you'll know who your representatives are, you'll know how to access the power and the responsibilities of government ... effectively.... It finally makes sense out of a process and a structure that right now are totally incomprehensible to everybody."

There's a bit of a refresher, Speaker. I remember that debate—some quotes at the time. Ironically, the then opposition parties voted against the bill. We brought it in, but now, 20 years later, you've seen the light, and that's a good thing, and I'll support your initiative.

1740

Hon. Jeff Leal: But you know, Tim, it was interesting. That bill set up the—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Agriculture, would you come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The member has a good point.

So the second part—because I had said that would be about 10 minutes, and then the next 10 minutes of my remarks would be, what were the impacts of that? The member from Peterborough is right, and he remembers that there were, as a result, a number of politicians—and it was the right thing to do. We campaigned on it, we carried it out and we did it. It did mean there were a lot of Conservative-versus-Conservative battles. We were in the majority; we had 82 members. I sat back there; I don't even know if my seat is still around, if there's an impression on the floor in that back corner.

So there were 82 of us at the time and then there were some member-against-member—so you're right. Chris Stockwell, who had been—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Ford nation versus the Stockwell nation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: And interestingly, who won that one? Do you remember?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Stockwell.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Chris Stockwell won that nomination.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Agriculture, you're warned.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am baiting him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): And you might get the next warning.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's Thursday afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I know.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I was elected in Niagara South in 1995. Niagara South was my riding in 1995: my hometown, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and the slice of Niagara Falls south of McLeod Road. My riding, by the way, had—you remember that one? The member before me had been Ray Haggerty for some time, a very solid member. He'd actually represented the riding, a Liberal member, since 1967. The riding was Liberal since before I was born, as a matter of fact. It did go NDP in—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: How old were you?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I was born in 1967, a centennial baby, so the same year the Leafs last won the cup.

I won that riding in a squeaker, with 38% of the vote. I won by 1,200 votes the first time—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Wow.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yes, for sure. I remember Aubrey Foley was the Liberal candidate at the time. Ray had retired. There were stories in the Niagara Falls Review about the coming Aubrey Foley dynasty in Niagara South because Ray Haggerty had been there for 20-some years. I remember election night, too. Mr. Foley went around in a limousine with a nice boutonniere on his lapel to his polling stations, shaking hands with all his polling workers. I had borrowed my parents' van, in a pair of jeans that I ripped getting out of the van, and had gone around the polling stations thanking my workers. So we probably had a different sort of style.

I won in a squeaker—1,200 votes in 1995, 38% of the vote.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know.

You work hard. You try to develop a good reputation. You keep track of the work that you do. You help people out. You get four years. You try to do better.

In 1999, the boundaries changed because of that act, because of, similar to what we're doing today, a bigger, more dramatic change. So where I had been, Niagara South, and Erie came together with Lincoln. The member for Lincoln was?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Ross Hall?

Mr. Tim Hudak: He was previously; Frank Sheehan this time around. Frank Sheehan was a real leader in the insurance industry, a strong businessman, really a colourful, outspoken politician. Premier Harris made him the chair of the Red Tape Commission. I think he was the perfect guy for it; he was pretty tough. He had a heart of gold, Frank—very, very generous. But if you saw him publicly, and my colleague from St. Catharines would

agree, he was very rough and tumble, a scrapper. He made that Fighting Irishman, the Notre Dame symbol, look like a slacker, I think, Frank, when he got his ire up.

Frank, sadly, passed away just over a year or so ago—a good long life. He left a very loving family. His son carries on with the business. He was an outstanding member. So Frank and I could have scored off—Erie versus Lincoln—for that riding. It seemed a better Conservative riding. I remember Frank saying to me, “You know what, kid? You might have a future in politics and in the PC Party. I’m going to run in Niagara Centre.”

Niagara Centre meant he was going to take on Peter Kormos—a legend, right? Nobody could beat Kormos. Frank took him on. They had just some colourful debates. I remember the stories in the media; it was great, great politics. You had two real street-fighting politicians from different sides of the political spectrum squaring off in that Niagara Centre riding, which at the time was Pelham, Welland and Port Colborne. And Frank did well. Kormos ended up winning with about 4,000 votes, but it was a closer margin than we’d seen in that riding in a long, long time, which Kormos had taken in a by-election back in the mid- to late 1980s, about 1987 or 1988, I think it was.

Peter was an extraordinary member, and he’ll be remembered a long, long time in this place and certainly in Niagara for his great work. And if you wanted to take on Kormos, that was pretty brave. Frank did that, instead of facing off against me for Erie–Lincoln.

Erie–Lincoln was good to me. In 1999, I won by 6,000 votes. Vance Badaway was the member I had taken on at the time. Vance was then mayor of Port Colborne and is now the new MP for the Niagara Centre riding. Logically, if I had lost to Vance Badaway, I’d be a federal Liberal MP now under Justin Trudeau. Does that make sense? Maybe not. Congratulations to Vance; he’s now the MP for the Niagara Centre riding.

We did the redistribution. We had to learn the new areas. In 1999, I won the riding by 6,000 votes in Erie–Lincoln—and, I will say, the one and only MPP ever for Eric–Lincoln, because then in 2007, the riding boundaries changed once more into Niagara West–Glanbrook. In Niagara West–Glanbrook, by the way, I didn’t have to face anybody for the nomination. The riding actually worked out well. It was largely part of the Lincoln riding. I told you I started with 38%. I won by about 1,200 votes.

So here’s 2007, and 2007 was when my daughter was born, during the campaign. I was off the campaign trail for a little bit—I think the last seven to 10 days of the campaign. There were some complications in the hospital, so I left the campaign trail. Ironically, I had the biggest margin of victory yet. My father, who was my campaign manager that election campaign, said, “Next election campaign, Tim, you’re not going to knock on a single door. You do better when you’re not there.” Cute story.

So that was Niagara West–Glanbrook, which now I’m going to lose under the new boundary redistributions. It

will become now the Niagara West riding, which Dean Allison—and congratulations to Dean for his strong victory there in the federal election recently. So I’ll miss Glanbrook, I’ll miss upper Stoney Creek—areas of my riding that actually are kind of like the GTA of Hamilton, if you will: rapid development for that area, a lot of new single-family homes, young families that want to get a home of their own, pay off the mortgage, maybe raise kids. They have growth pressure issues. So I think of that part of my riding as more or less the 905 of the Hamilton area. I’ve had the honour of serving the folks in that area since the 2007 campaign.

I’ll miss my riding president as well, John Demik, who did a hell of a job for me: great leader, small businessman, construction, giving to his church and his community and certainly his family. I’ll miss the Binbrook Fair. Maybe they’ll have me back. We have the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum as well there, which has a remarkable Remembrance Day ceremony, the second-biggest in the nation, I understand. They just pack that place. If you’ve been there, you’ll know what I’m talking about. If not, I encourage you to visit the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in the new boundary of Niagara West.

Another quick story. I actually—this is a secret to success, maybe, for those of you who are relatively new in this place. You want to be like Hudak? Today, I don’t represent a single inch that I was first elected to in 1995. How did I do that? I kept changing boundaries as they got to know me. That ensured I got re-elected. Honest to God. Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet and a slice of Niagara Falls—I don’t represent a single inch anymore because the boundaries kept changing and I moved farther and farther west.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Very nomadic.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, maybe so, and that’s maybe how I won, right? They didn’t get tired of me.

I moved. I lived in Fort Erie, and then Deb and I bought a home in Wellandport in the old riding of Erie–Lincoln because it was right in the middle. It’s not as big as my northern colleagues’, not by a long shot, but it’s a pretty good size for southern Ontario. I figured Fort Erie to Dunnville was quite a trip, so we moved and bought a house in Wellandport, kind of smack dab in the middle. And then the boundaries changed on me again, so I ended up being in the farthest southeastern corner of the riding.

The good news? With Wainfleet being added and Stoney Creek and Glanbrook leaving, I’m back in the middle again. That cuts down on my mileage. I’m looking forward to an opportunity to represent the folks of Wainfleet again. They’re good people. They’re right across the Welland River from me. To quote Sarah Palin—I know you always say that here in the Legislative Assembly—I can see Wainfleet from my back porch, right there across the Welland River. I look forward, voters willing, to having an opportunity to represent the good people of Wainfleet and the southern and western part of the Niagara Peninsula once more.

As I wrap up just this little walk that I’ve been through the last number of election campaigns, boundaries have

changed. They change with the census. They change with populations. I think that's actually a good thing. And I think it's also a good thing when we match up our federal boundaries with our provincial boundaries. I just think that is sensible, it's transparent, it's fair. It eliminates the temptation of gerrymandering, as I said.

I do remain convinced, and I will defend it with any federal colleague, that there's a greater demand on provincial members and their staffs. I get that. Some may argue, then, there should be more of us relative to the federal government. They made that decision back in 1955, as I spoke about in my remarks. I don't think so. That does mean we work harder for less money than our federal colleagues, but I do think it's the right move under this bill to match those federal boundaries.

1750

For me personally, I'm getting back closer to the roots where I started from. I'll have a chance to do this down the road, but I thank the people from Niagara West-Glanbrook and Glanbrook-Upper Stoney Creek for putting their faith in me—a great honour to be from that part of the province. I know they'll be in good hands down the road when this does happen, but it's like coming back home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to add my two cents in my two minutes on the heels of the comments from the member from Niagara-Glanbrook—excuse me—Niagara West-Glanbrook, although with all the stories of the various boundary changes, you can understand why I might get a bit tangled there.

I appreciate hearing the history of the issue. Today has been an interesting opportunity to appreciate the across-the-floor reminiscing and remembering things. I won't tell the member what I was doing back in 1996 or how old I was, but I wasn't as engaged as I am now in the political process. I was just about voting age at that point, but not quite.

I think, though, that the conversation about fewer elected representatives leads us to a bigger and important part of this issue, which is about how those elected representatives do their work; how they work for and advocate for their communities.

Discussing Bill 115 and electoral boundaries, aligning provincial and federal boundaries, as we've heard, with the exception of up north: It's an important piece that all of these representatives need to be in touch with their communities and make sure they are really representing them in the best way, that it isn't just about having more people to represent voters; it's about having more people to speak with those voters.

For example, the northern boundaries—my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane has brought to the attention of people here the communities of Thorne and Eldee and Wahnapitae First Nation, that maybe there are still slight adjustments that need to be made to best represent the community. So let's make sure that when we're talking about having the more the merrier, it is more engaged. I think that needs to be our priority.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to thank the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook for bringing us down memory lane in the Niagara Peninsula. He has obviously found the secret of success by keeping moving—a moving target. You might call that the political rope-a-dope, as he went from one boundary to the other until they could catch up to him. Certainly he has been successful over the years. He follows in the footsteps of his parents in terms of their contribution to public life in the Niagara Peninsula.

I do want to mention, for the rural members here—because I love doing this—that the biggest losers when you diminished the number of seats in the province of Ontario from 130 to 103 were rural Ontario. You lost your influence, and yet you have been loyal to a large extent in rewarding those who took away that influence—just a note that I have noted to my rural friends over the years, some of whom understand that.

One of the great advantages, by the way, of our system is to compare it with the United States. There's gerrymandering going on to a great extent; that is, boundaries based on partisan political considerations. I've had people ask me over the years, "Do you think these are fairly done? The federal government did this. Don't you think they tried to rig the system?" The answer is no. These are done by independent commissions, and these are extremely beneficial to the people of this province and to our country. So I congratulate those who have done that over the years.

I appreciated the member mentioning the workload of MPPs and MPs and how they compare. As you know, MPPs are in a seven-year pay freeze and do not have a defined benefit pension plan. Our federal colleagues have accepted raises year after year and have a defined benefit pension plan, but I'm certainly not complaining about that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to, obviously, chime in on my colleague from Niagara West-Glanbrook's history lesson today for a lot of us new members. We don't often get to hear some of those perspectives as he has learned over the years.

Of course, the Minister without Portfolio will have mentioned the workload that we have. In my region now are five MPs representing the area that is represented by four MPPs, so we'll need two MPs to do the amount of work that one MPP does in the region of Waterloo, where I'm from: Kitchener-Conestoga, Kitchener South-Hespeler.

I think it's appropriate, when I've got a minute or so left, to thank those outgoing members who served the folks in the region of Waterloo: Peter Braid from Waterloo, PA to Infrastructure, the member who brought in, for those who contributed annually, the tax deduction; Stephen Woodworth, Kitchener Centre, who also served a couple of terms, served on the environment committee and was one of those guys that the Conservatives loved

in committee, kind of behind the scenes but there, of course; Minister Gary Goodyear in Cambridge–North Dumfries, having been the first member elected in the region, back in 2004, I believe, and who served as Minister of State for Science and Technology—of course, we thank him for his service. And my colleague federally, Harold Albrecht—having hung on to his seat, I'm happy to have Harold. I'm a four-year member. We get along great and we work together and now we're both opposition members holding respective Liberal governments to account.

I'll conclude with those remarks and look forward to my colleague wrapping up for his two minutes. Thank you, Speaker, for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook for his journey over the political landscape. I hadn't thought before that there was the possibility of jumping from ice floe to ice floe to survive politically over time, but I guess if you're from the Niagara region, the idea of the ice floes going towards the Falls at a good clip gives you that inspiration to keep moving, keep nimble.

My colleague from London West talked earlier about the bill that's before this House. She talked about some of the issues that she had hoped would be addressed by this bill. Certainly, when the minister presented the bill initially, there were great statements about all the different issues that would be addressed. There are many issues that do need to be addressed in this bill that aren't being addressed.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about some of the adjustments in northern boundaries—if we're not going to follow the federal boundaries, that would make sense to people who currently have to travel five hours to see him in his constituency office, as opposed to the fact that they're 10 minutes' travel away from the constituency office of my colleague from Nickel Belt.

It may be a bit much for us to take on, but I think it would make sense, given that we're redrawing these boundaries, reshaping the boundaries, if we're going to maintain the number of ridings in the North that we have—and I think it's a good idea to do that; I think it's fair, given the workload that's presented by the great distances—that we should look at rationalizing some of those boundaries so that people are better served. I felt that the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was quite correct in saying that if he read this bill as one of his

constituents, he would be guided by their concern that they not have huge impositions placed on them in terms of travel to be in touch with their representatives.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook. You have two minutes.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'd like to thank my colleagues. It was a fun way to end on a Thursday evening and I appreciate the analogy, whether it was jumping from ice floe to ice floe or, as my colleague from St. Catharines said, the secret of success, at least for me, is to keep on moving—almost sounds like a Johnny Cash song. That got me through. So I'm moving again, moving again.

Look, we're supporting the act. I think it's the right thing to do. There's a long history here, but I think it ultimately resides on the right principle of matching the boundaries.

I'll end the evening, as we're heading back to our ridings, on a point that I began with half an hour ago or so.

You're going back to your ridings. We're leaving here in the assembly. You are going back home. You're heading to your ridings, just thinking about what your day looks like on Friday, Saturday and Sunday before you come back. Then picture somebody sitting next to you who now is done for the day, who has no riding to go to, does not have to be held accountable to voters for decisions or what they said in debate. Proportional representation and party lists mean that the son or daughter of a big donor, some party hack who couldn't get elected to save their life, is going to sit next to you as an equal colleague. Is that good for democracy? What incentive does that send, as MPPs? Is that good for our country?

I've had the honour of serving since 1995. If I have the honour of being re-elected, I'll have been in four different boundaries. My God, it puts a discipline on you to get back home, to show up and to listen. If you detach that, our country is not going to be the place that it has been. I just can't imagine somebody sitting next to me who doesn't have to work back in their riding—only working with the insiders. I've been there; I've been head insider.

I respect members who get elected, who actually have to go back, work and win the battles to get here time and time again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until October 26 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
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Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)		
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
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MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre délégué à la Condition féminine
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean – Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma -Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones

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Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham-Kent–Essex	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanhof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
		Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
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Lisa M. Thompson
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Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

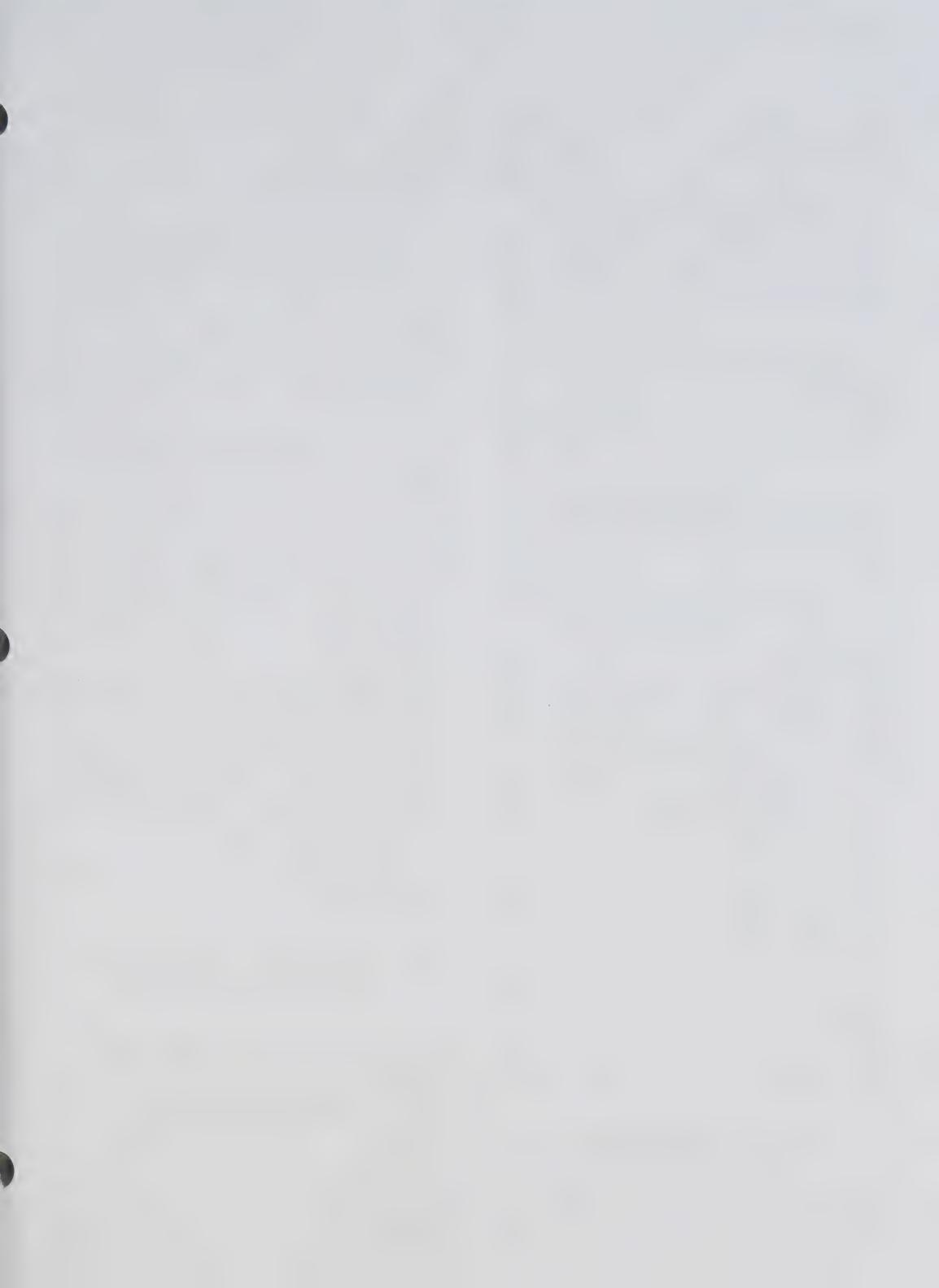
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
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Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch



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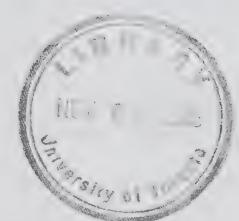
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Monday 26 October 2015

Lundi 26 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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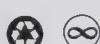
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 octobre 2015

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to welcome Mayor Trevor Birtch from the city of Woodstock, and Brian Donlevy, a great reporter from CKOT in Tillsonburg, who are both here in the gallery today. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Kathy Moreside, who is the mother of page Abby Moreside from the great riding of Oxford. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Vanthof: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the folks from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here today, some of whom I have had the honour to work with. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: With great pleasure, I want to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario to Queen's Park today, in the members' east gallery, including Peter Gould, the general manager and CEO; and Ralph Dietrich, who is the board chair. We also have a director from the wonderful riding of Peterborough, Will Vanderhorst.

DFO is hosting a reception this afternoon from 5 to 7 p.m. in committee rooms 228 and 230. I say to all members, this would be a great opportunity to see one of the great sectors of Ontario's agricultural economy.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Adding to everyone, I would also like to extend my personal welcome to my friend and fellow community member from South Bruce, DFO chair Ralph Dietrich. I know he's proud to call Mildmay home, and he does a great job representing dairy farmers.

M^{me} France Gélinas: This little page, Vanessa, is page captain today, and she has some nice visitors with her: her mother, Josée Morris; her father, Michael Morris; her brother David; her grandmother Pauline Chartrand; and her grandfather Laurier Chartrand. Welcome to Queen's Park, and congratulations, Vanessa.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce two special people to the House today. With us are Brooke Crewson, my executive assistant here at Queen's Park, and Scott Parry, my new legislative assistant here at Queen's Park. Welcome to both.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to welcome an outstanding farm leader, here with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario: my friend Ian Harrop.

As well, the family of page captain John Millar—Kathleen Millar, his mother; Daniel Millar, his father; Murry Trask, his grandfather; and his aunt Dianne Trask—are all here today to see John Millar in action.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to welcome the Dairy Farmers of Ontario, especially Sid Atkinson from the Campbellford-Warkworth area.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have two introductions. In the east members' gallery, I have a local dairy farmer from Leeds county, Henry Oosterhof, who is here today with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. Welcome, Henry.

In the west members' gallery, I'd like to introduce a Scarborough resident, Mukund Purohit, who is here with us today and has the distinction of having worked on Indian Prime Minister Modi's campaign. Welcome both to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today I'd like to welcome, from Dairy Farmers of Ontario, Peter Gould, general manager; and Peter Van Sleeuwen and Nick Thurler, both board members from my riding. Of course, we look forward to seeing them again this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Henry Wydeven, a board member with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario from the St. Marys area; and Will Patterson, a student who is here to learn more about our work at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Murray Sherk from New Dundee in my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, part of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce dairy farmers—I don't know if there are any here from Oxford, but being the dairy capital, I'm sure that they all represent Oxford in one way or the other.

I also have to note that the mother to Abby Moreside, one of our pages, is here: Kathy Moreside. I introduced her earlier, but I thought maybe I'd do it a second time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My friends, we have some very special guests here in the Speaker's gallery. With us today are the children who attend Ronald McDonald House, and their teacher, Danielle Myers. We are glad that they are here with us today. Welcome. This is one of their wishes, to be here.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Due to the mounting public outrage, this government has admitted to doling out an additional \$2.5 million in taxpayer money because of their failed two-tier bargaining system. But that admission is not going to satisfy the thousands of Ontarians who have contacted us, and I'm sure they've contacted the Premier's office as well.

Mr. Speaker, my question is simple: Where did that money come from?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said repeatedly, there is a cost associated with negotiations. There is also a cost associated with negotiations, and I have said quite clearly that any of the money that has been on the table has been part of the overall compensation package. I've answered that question a number of times. I answered it in the media.

1040

The reality is that our top priority is to ensure that our students enjoy one of the best education systems in the world. They do enjoy that. We want to keep it that way, and we are in a process right now—it's an unprecedented process. There hasn't been a provincial bargaining system in place before. This is the first round of bargaining within that provincial process. We will reach a conclusion with all of our education partners, and at the conclusion of that, if the Leader of the Opposition would like to engage in a conversation about how to modify Bill 122 or how to modify that process, we are open and welcoming that process.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hope I don't have to start.

Supplementary question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier, and I'll be more specific: Every dollar budgeted in the education ministry is assigned to a specific program. In June 2014, we learned that the Minister of Education took \$1.6 million in funding for an anti-bullying and autism awareness program to pay the legal fees in their lawsuit with Ontario school bus drivers.

So again, Mr. Speaker, a very simple accounting question for the Premier: From which program line item in the 2015 education budget did the Premier take the \$2.5 million for her mismanaged negotiations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said, the proposals that are on the table and the money that is on the table are all part of the compensation envelope. That's what we've said all along, because these negotiations are operating within a net-zero environment.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It sounds to me that my message wasn't strong enough. If I have to ramp it up, I will. Stop it.

Please carry on.

Premier Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition will be aware that on Friday, the education minister and I said to our education partners that what is critical right now is that we come to an agreement. The situation that pertains in our schools right now in terms of the cleanliness of the schools and the opportunity for kids to take part in a full program, including extracurriculars, has to be dealt with.

So we've said that by November 1, if there is not a deal in place, if there's not an agreement in place or the labour action has not stopped, then there will be the potential for the terms of employment to be changed, and that could include docking of pay. But we have not issued that permission yet. We have said quite clearly we need until November 1, and everyone is at the table, but bargaining is continuing now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: This explanation doesn't wash. Even though the Premier has said this is business as usual, last week the Globe and Mail's article reported that ETFO has not accepted and will not accept any government money to pay for bargaining costs. The CBC quotes labour lawyer Howard Levitt, who said covering a union's bargaining costs is unusual and raises all kinds of questions. He said, "It's counterintuitive and antithetical to the interests of the taxpayers and employers."

Mr. Speaker, if the payments were not made in the best interest of taxpayers, will the Premier tell us who, other than the Liberal Party, this is in the best interest of?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the Leader of the Opposition is probably aware of the commentary of many people on this subject. It's not unprecedented for a party in the public or the private sector to assist unions with the cost of collective bargaining. A CAW negotiator told the Star, "It is not unheard of for private companies to cover all or part of the cost of a union's expenses associated directly with negotiating a contract."

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: If, at the conclusion of this round of negotiations—which is unprecedented; there has not been a provincial round before. If, at the end of that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The decision has been made by those who decided that shouting people down is the answer. I will move to warnings.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If, at the end of this process, the Leader of the Opposition—I don't know what his experience with negotiating is, but I would be happy to have him and, quite frankly, the leader of the third party. We can talk about input into the negotiating process. I'd be very interested to hear their concerns after we have come to agreements with our education partners.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is to the Premier. The Premier told the Toronto Star last week that paying \$2.5 million for union negotiations is business as usual. No one is buying that. The only reason the Liberals' idea of business as usual is out is because their secret deal was leaked. Every business I know keeps receipts to justify their expenses.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier find it acceptable that she gave \$2.5 million without a single receipt? A simple yes or no: Is it acceptable to pay that amount of money, of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, without a single receipt?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess somebody didn't hear what I said.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I believe what I said is that in a \$20-billion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The publicly funded education system in this province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —is a more than \$20-billion enterprise. There are costs associated with negotiating agreements in that environment. That is what I said.

What is critical to me right now, as the Premier, and to the Minister of Education, is that we've got students in our public elementary schools who are not able to have the full program. Their schools are not being cleaned in the way that they should be.

My focus is on working with our education partners to get an agreement in an environment where we are operating in a provincial negotiation process. That is new, Mr. Speaker. It is the first time we have gone through this formal process. At the conclusion of this process, if the Leader of the Opposition would like—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Wrap up, please.

Premier Wynne: —to bring his experience and his knowledge of negotiations to the table, we'd be happy to hear from him on how he'd like to make the system better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again, to the Premier: The public isn't going to buy that excuse.

Business as usual, to the Premier, means paying multi-million-dollar organizations to negotiate, and they're making up a one-page document to justify it?

If this bargaining is really business as usual as you say, as the *Globe and Mail* has said, "Let's see an accounting, down to the penny. All those zeros in a row suggest that no accounting was done...."

The Globe went on to ask, "What was this money really for?"

Mr. Speaker, if the Premier can't produce a spreadsheet down to the penny that justifies this \$2.5 million, maybe the Premier can explain and tell the House what this was really for.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think it's important to understand that, in fact, this is not business as usual. This is a transformational round of negotiations that's implementing a new collective bargaining scheme for the first time ever.

In fact, we have had significant discussions for the last year. We spent six months with the initial step of settling on central-local split. We have been in the process of, literally, bringing hundreds and hundreds of collective agreements into nine central collective agreements. That takes a lot of work and a long time.

We recognize that both the school boards and the unions have unusual costs in this unique round of collective bargaining.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again, for the Premier: "Business as usual" is your government's talking point. You can run from it now, but it's what you've said.

This government gave away \$2.5 million without asking for a single receipt. The best explanation the Minister of Education could muster was that the money was for hotel rooms and pizza. I'm not sure where the minister buys her pizza, but the pepperoni must be gold-plated.

Is the Premier really going to insult the intelligence of the people of Ontario and expect them to believe that \$2.5 million was for hotels and pizza? Or will the Premier come clean and tell the Legislature, tell the people of Ontario, what this money was really for?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are not going to get an opportunity to get shots in when I'm standing.

Please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The pizza is not gold-plated—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —but the process of renting hotel rooms for, literally, a year—not residential rooms, but meeting rooms. We have been renting meeting rooms for over a year—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I were some people who are already warned, I wouldn't be saying anything.

1050

Hon. Liz Sandals: This is not an unusual practice. I can remember an occasion during the Mike Harris government where his people called in school boards and unions, and do you know who paid for the hotel?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the chair, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Mike Harris's government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. A reminder for everyone: to the chair, please.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier has been rushing to sell off Hydro One. She has refused to allow a referendum, public hearings or any form at all of public feedback. But every time that the people of Ontario have had a chance to express an opinion, they have overwhelmingly told this Premier to stop the sell-off of Hydro One and to find another way to fund infrastructure.

Ontario families, municipalities and businesses all want the Premier to slow down and find another way to fund infrastructure. Does the Premier believe that the people of Ontario are wrong and that there is no other way to finance infrastructure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think that it is extremely important that we look at all avenues to invest in infrastructure, because the fact is, there is a long backlog of need in this province. I remember there were 10 years before we came into office where a government didn't invest in infrastructure. We came in in 2003 and we started making those investments.

I've said all along that the money that we are putting into infrastructure, the \$130 billion over the next 10 years—that is what we can do, but we've always said that we need a federal partner to work with us. So we are implementing our plan as we committed to do when we went to the people last year. We will implement that plan and we will make those investments, but we also need a federal partner so that we can do all of the things that are necessary across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has said many times that they have to rush the sell-off of Hydro One. She said that she will push her half-baked scheme out the door because of the sudden urgency of building infrastructure. She more or less repeated that just now.

But here are the facts: In 2014-15, the government spent \$300 million less on transportation capital than it had budgeted for. In 2013-14, the government spent a whopping \$1.2 billion less than budgeted for. Will the Premier admit finally that the sell-off of Hydro One has never been about money for infrastructure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, broadening the ownership in Hydro One is all about investment in infrastructure. There is a 10-year plan that we have in place, and if there are projects that come in under budget, that's something that the leader of the third party should be celebrating. There is planning, there is building going on.

She knows full well that in every municipality around this province—in every community—there is a need for investment within the community and there is a need for investment to link communities to one another. That is in the best interests of our economic prosperity as a province, but also, community by community, it's what businesses need in order to be able to expand and bring more business here to Ontario. That's why we're making these investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in fact, the Liberals have had 12 years to build infrastructure, but really they haven't. For 12 years, New Democrats have been pushing them—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. For the sake of those that may not have been here to hear what I had said, we're at the warning stage.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —to make those badly needed investments, but, frankly, they didn't. And now, suddenly, the Premier says it is urgent, but public accounts—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation is warned.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —show us very clearly that in just the last two years, this Premier spent \$1.5 billion less than she budgeted for. The Premier is not even utilizing the money that she has, and yet she continues to insist that she has to sell off Hydro One in an urgent way.

Will this Premier admit that she does not need to sell off Hydro One and just stop this wrong-headed move?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I won't.

I'm not sure how the leader of the third party gets around this province, but if she's been in the Windsor region at all over the last three years, she will know that there's been building going on. She just has to go up to Eglinton Avenue in Toronto and she will see that there is building going on. There is infrastructure being built all over this province—historic investment.

The fact is, the way that budgets work is there is money that is invested in planning, there's money invested in accumulating property, there are environmental assessments that go on. There is work going on across the province. That work can't go on unless we make the investments that we are making, so we are going to continue to do that because the Hamilton LRT will not happen if we don't do the upfront work to make sure that those shovels get in the ground.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People have been telling this Premier to find

another way to fund infrastructure instead of selling off Hydro One. We know that the Premier has other options. According to the government's own reports, a 1% increase in corporate taxes would raise up to \$700 million a year. That's much more than the \$400 million a year that her sell-off scheme will apparently earn.

Will this Premier admit that she has other options but instead stubbornly refuses to take those options, and instead sell off Hydro One, a plan, a scheme, an effort, that Ontarians soundly reject?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Whether we are talking about investment in infrastructure or whether we're talking about enhancement to social programs or whether we're talking about supporting businesses and communities, the leader of the third party only has one answer, and that is to raise corporate taxes. She spends that \$700 million over and over again.

The fact is, we know that businesses in Ontario need to be competitive. They are operating now in a competitive tax environment, but they need something else. They need infrastructure investment so that they can move their goods, and their people can move around and be connected to the communities they want to be connected to. That's why we're making these investments.

The oversimplification by the third party will not get business investing in this province. We are taking the steps to bring business to Ontario, to increase connectivity and improve people's quality of life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier, in the past, has often said, "It would be great if we had a federal partner working with us" on infrastructure. In fact, she said that today, Speaker. And now, the federal government has promised billions upon billions of dollars for infrastructure and transit. The Premier insists she can't wait for the federal money, though, because she has to rush to sell off Hydro One. The Premier also has \$1.5 billion in unspent infrastructure money from the last two years.

It is clear that the Premier doesn't need the money all that quickly. So my question is a simple one: Why is the Premier plowing ahead with the sell-off of Hydro One when it is so obviously unnecessary?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Just because the money hasn't been put out—spent—doesn't mean that it's not needed for current projects. I would just explain to the leader of the third party that the money that's allocated actually has to be kept for that purpose so that when that bill comes in for the work that's been done, we actually have the money to pay for it. That is the way the funding works. The projects are under way.

1100

The fact is that we've said all along we need a federal partner. The money we have to invest in infrastructure will do a lot of good, but it's not all that needs to be done. I've worked with Premiers across the country, and we know that we are just barely keeping up—in some cases, not keeping up—with the needs of infrastructure in the country. We need that federal partner to make sure

that we can build new and we can enhance the economy of the whole country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to media reports, it is this Premier herself who refuses to even consider asking Ontario's wealthiest corporations to pay just a little bit more to fund infrastructure. It is this Premier who has allowed \$1.5 billion in infrastructure money to go unspent. And it is this Premier who cannot wait for the billions of dollars promised from the federal government.

The Premier's justifications for this unnecessary sell-off are insulting to the public's intelligence. Will this Premier do the right thing: stop the sell-off of Hydro One and find another way to fund her infrastructure promises?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: What's insulting to the intelligence of the people of this province is the leader of the third party's contention that to raise corporate taxes by a little bit is going to solve all of our problems in this provinces, that that's going to cover all of the expenses we need when it comes to investing in infrastructure.

The biggest concern of our business community in a fiercely competitive global economy is that we would take the advice of the party opposite, jack up corporate taxes, kill jobs in this province, stop building infrastructure and make our economy uncompetitive.

Mr. Speaker, this party and this Premier are committed to making our business community competitive in a fiercely competitive global economy. We're going to do what it takes to do that, and we're going to act contrary to the views of the member opposite.

TEACHER'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Treasury Board president. Her job is to eliminate the deficit and to ensure government accountability, but the slush fund payments to education unions fly in the face of her personal commitments to this assembly.

We learned of a secret \$1-million payment to OSSTF in the media. The education minister says that it was a one-time thing, until she got caught, and now it's \$2.5 million. Who knows what secret payments will add up to by the time she finishes speaking here in question period today—and all without any receipts. Now we know that other unions who may not have gotten this golden handshake, or golden milkshake, at the meeting space may want more.

My question is—and it's a very serious one—to the Treasury Board president: How could you let the education minister undermine your deficit reduction targets and, as importantly, Bill 8, a law you put before this House to increase accountability after eHealth, Ornge and the cancelled gas plants scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: As a result of the year we spent at the hotel, I would like to remind people that in fact we actually did end up with the first-ever precedential collective agreements. We have collective agreements with the English Catholic teachers, we have collective agreements with the public secondary teachers and we have collective agreements with the French teachers who work in both the French public and French Catholic school boards.

We have three precedential collective agreements. Those represent hundreds of collective agreements being folded into three central provincial collective agreements. That took time, and when you take time, there are costs involved in taking that time. We recognize that and we have supported both our school board colleagues and our union colleagues in coming to a three-way, tripartite agreement in this transformational round of bargaining.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: She may have been spending some time at the hotel Grand-Mère with Chuck Guité and unresolved receipts, but the rest of us were standing here defending Ontario taxpayers and, particularly, Ontario students.

Back to the Treasury Board president: The Liberals handed out at least \$2.5 million in slush fund money that was intended for kids in classrooms. They cut cheques to the same unions who helped them, 18 months ago, run attack ads against the Progressive Conservative Party. Even Sam Hammond, from one of the unions they do not have a deal with, called this deal "unethical."

I ask the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I've heard of stealing candy from a baby, but I've never heard of stealing money from kids in the classroom to get re-elected.

Will the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I'll ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Finish up.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Will the Treasury Board minister explain to this House why it's okay to get rid of her deficit reduction targets; why it's okay to eliminate her own Bill 8, her own accountability law, and will the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Stop the clock. Be seated, please. When I stand, members sit.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think, Speaker, we've now discovered what the fundamental issue here is: We have a difference in the way that we work with our colleagues in

both the school boards and in the unions. The way they want to work with the unions, as we found from their campaign platform, was to fire 100,000 people; probably, as near as we could figure out with their calculations, fire 20,000 people in the school board sector. We actually don't think that's the way to work with people. We think that we need to bring together our school board colleagues and our union colleagues, and we all need to sit at the same table and come to agreement.

That's why we brought new school board collective bargaining legislation, which, if memory serves me, they voted against because they don't believe in the principle of negotiation.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. The Premier's recent threat aimed at education workers continues to create chaos in our schools. Students, parents and education workers want quality education in Ontario, but this government is only providing cuts and uncertainty.

For more than a year, the Liberal government has failed to treat the negotiating process with respect and attention, just like this government has failed to treat education with respect and attention, given more than a decade of chronic underfunding of our public education system. They are proud of a planned \$500-million cut to education, proud of firing 21 early childhood educators in Windsor-Essex, proud of laying off 118 teachers in Peterborough.

This government's record on education is nothing to be proud of. The Minister of Education has lost all credibility and needs to go.

Will the Premier admit that her recent threat to education workers is only going to cause more chaos in our schools and force students and families to pay the price for her minister's failure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, we have the official opposition saying that we have spent too much time because there are costs associated with collective bargaining, and we have spent too much time in negotiating and we shouldn't be putting out that money to pay for those negotiation processes.

On the other hand, we've got the NDP saying that we really should let this go on forever, that the collective bargaining process should go on forever; that we shouldn't use any of the tools that are actually part of the labour law to bring to a conclusion a situation that is putting kids at risk, that is not giving families the information they need about their kids' progress, that is keeping schools dirty. Well, I'm not willing to do that. I'm not willing to let that go on and on and on.

Our education partners know that I believe in collective bargaining. They know that I believe that we are allies with them, but they also know that we have to act in the best interests of children.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It was, in fact, the government that walked away from bargaining, not ETFO. Let's get back to the facts, Speaker.

The Premier uttering threats and stomping her feet because the Minister of Education couldn't do her job is no way to negotiate. Since the beginning of the process, the Minister of Education has failed to do her job when it comes to bargaining. Now our kids are paying the price of increased chaos in our schools, as if cuts to special education funding in eight boards totalling \$22.5 million wasn't bad enough.

Students and families shouldn't be paying the price for the minister's incompetence and neglect of the education file.

My question is simple: Will the Premier fire the Minister of Education immediately—yes or no?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want this House and the people of Ontario to know that our Minister of Education has, as her top priority, the best interests of the students of this province. There are probably few people in the province who know as much about the education system as the Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have one of the best education systems in the world. People come from all over the world to look at how we have developed the education system. Eighty-four per cent of kids in this province graduate from high school. It is a model.

The fact is that our government needs to be working with school boards and with our education partners, both teachers and support staff. That's what we're doing as part of the collective bargaining process. It's not easy, Mr. Speaker. It takes time, but it is necessary.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Cristina Martins: This question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, over the summer, as mandated by the Premier, your ministry conducted a review of the rules governing our municipal elections. We are keenly aware that our local democracies are critical hubs of civic activity and an important entry point to Ontario's governance system. That's why our municipalities and the local leaders we choose need to be supported by strong, clear and fair rules. These rules need to be simple and reflect how modern campaigns should be run. They should address the changing spectrum of needs that communities encounter throughout the municipal election process.

Mr. Speaker, these are important goals. Through you, can the minister tell this House a bit about the review and its consultation process?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to respond to the question from the member from Davenport. I want to begin by saying that Ontarians really care about munici-

pal elections. They care about voting, and they want to make sure that their voices are heard.

Over the last several months, I've been travelling the province, talking to over 200 municipal councils and a number of citizens about how they view their elections system. We've been hearing a lot about what works and what doesn't work so well. We've looked specifically and closely at campaign finance rules, whether third-party advertising should be regulated, challenges and barriers to making elections more accessible, and whether municipal election rules are effectively enforced.

Speaker, I believe that hearing from as many municipalities and Ontarians as possible—and we've had wonderful feedback—is the way to move forward. We'll be presenting more specifics very soon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: In addition to the goals the minister has laid out, this time around, the Municipal Elections Act review has an added objective, and that's our government's commitment to provide municipalities with the option to implement ranked ballot voting for our next municipal election cycle in 2018. As a new frontier, this interesting election tool has garnered significant attention in conversations throughout our communities, including my own riding of Davenport, and in various news coverage throughout the media.

Our municipal partners have been considering whether moving forward with efforts to establish ranked ballot voting in 2018 will meet their communities' needs. Across some municipal councils, there has been some confusion as of late on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister share what he and his team have been hearing and working on in regard to ranked ballots?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to respond as simply as I can. We've had over 1,900 responses on the issue of ranked ballots. About 97% of them view it very positively. There are some who don't; some of those people might be predictable, but that's okay. So we're working very hard on it.

We think that anything that will enhance voter turnout and get people to give a little bit more attention to the importance of municipal campaigns is worth doing.

We have reason to believe, based on the experience of other countries, that a move to ranked ballots would make election campaigns more civil, ensure candidates will have a vested interest in working better together right from the get-go and reduce negative campaigning while increasing focus on issues that matter.

It will be an option. It will be coming forward when we deliver the whole package. I look forward to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Education. Last week, this minister was quick to defend her government's payouts—\$1 million to OSSTF, \$1

million to OECTA and \$500,000 to AEFO—on the grounds that, “We haven’t fired anybody. We haven’t cut anybody.”

I want to remind the minister of the reality that her government is firing and they are cutting and they are compromising our children’s education by taking away \$2.5 million from students and giving it to teachers’ unions.

In my riding alone, 50 educational assistants have been eliminated and, consequently, special education students have been told to stay at home or not to come to school as a result of scant resources.

My question to the minister is: Does she not respect our students and educational assistants enough to acknowledge that there is a cut to the classroom?

Hon. Liz Sandals: No, there are not any cuts to the classroom as a result of the collective agreements that we have negotiated. In fact, the generators in terms of class size generators are the same. In fact, many of them are actually the same as the ones you legislated. The class size generators are the ones that were in place prior to the agreements being cut. We agreed in a previous round of bargaining that we would hire additional teachers beyond those class size ratios and, in fact, as a result of those previous agreements, we hired 2,300 additional teachers over and beyond the class size generators. As a result of these collective agreements, we continue to fund those 2,300 teachers in addition to the classroom teachers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Education: When is a cut not a cut? The reality is, you have taken \$2.5 million away from our vulnerable students: Aaron Vessie’s sons, Owen and Noah, who are autistic; Kathy Cotter’s seven-year-old daughter, who has retinal dystrophy and is legally blind; Candice Huber’s eight-year-old son, who has type 1 diabetes and suffers from hypoglycemic episodes. With their EAs gone, there is no one to watch and keep them safe.

I sent the minister personal letters from more than 30 parents of special needs students whose EAs have been fired. These students, their parents and every special education teacher and support staff who received their pink slips are deeply offended that this minister is flippant in regard to their loss of jobs and classroom resources. They can’t understand how she can continue to stand there and say, with a straight face, “We haven’t fired; we haven’t cut.”

The minister is responsible for this mess. On behalf of these students and families who want their children to receive the education they’re entitled to, I ask: Will you bring back the EAs? Will you put the children first?

Hon. Liz Sandals: If we can just reflect a little bit on special needs funding, special education funding, this year, the 2015-16 school year, students with spec ed requirements are receiving \$2.72 billion in addition to the regular funding that goes to every student. If you look at that, that’s an increase of \$225.7 million, or 9%, since 2012-13, so over the last few years. If you go back to the start year, the 2002-03 year, it’s an increase of 68%, or

\$1.1 billion since we took office. We are not cutting special education funding.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Just two weeks ago, in reference to US Steel, Justin Trudeau stated that the Canadian government needs to work with its provincial partners to ensure that people’s pensions are protected. I couldn’t agree more. US Steel has a towering moral debt to its workers and its pensioners.

Will the Premier use her influence with Mr. Trudeau to protect US Steel pensioners, to push for the release of those secret documents and agreements with US Steel, and to ensure that these moral debts will in the future be legal debts so that this kind of theft can never happen to Canadians again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite makes an important point. Mind you, court proceedings are still ongoing, but our government remains committed to working with all the stakeholders. Our goal, of course, is to achieve the long-term viability of the ongoing operations of US Steel Canada, and more importantly, to protect the employees and the retirees and suppliers and customers who are affected.

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While it is still ongoing, we do want to assure the member opposite that our government will work with the retirees by providing the support necessary over the next six months so that they can have their health benefits, and more importantly, we’ll establish a transition fund to enable that to take place. As the restructuring is ongoing, it’s important to note that the pensioners and the workers will be receiving their benefit plan.

To the point made around unsealing those secret documents by the Harris government that was achieved previously, indeed we will stand by the retirees and US Steel Canada to ensure that that’s unlocked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, it’s bad enough that the US Steel pension funds themselves are underfunded, but there is no trust account at all to pay for the benefits of the pensioners. Indeed, there seldom is.

The benefits that form part of an employer’s promise to its retirees are funded from a company’s current cash flows, not from trust accounts. Pensions were once funded this way, and after many bitter lessons, we decided on a better way. Perhaps it’s time for other post-retirement benefits to receive the same protection.

What will the Premier do to ensure that the medical, dental and health benefits of retirees are given the same financial stability and security as their pensions?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As the member knows, as restructuring continues it’s important to remember that the company is still operating and the retirees are still receiving their pensions.

As the member knows, and he makes reference to this, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada with a fund like

the PBGF, the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. This was made in 2012 to put in more sustainable footing, including increasing assessments and eligibility conditions to cover those benefits. I can confirm that the current estimates indicate that the PBGF is financially sound. The bottom line is that although the courts are processing and going through the approval process, this will not affect the PBGF coverage, if needed, in the future.

Again, I add that we will, as a government, continue to support the retirees and the workers over the next six months. That will not implicate the PBGF, but it is there—the only province in Canada that offers that, and we recognize that more has to be done.

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. We all know that Ontario's police officers work hard in our communities every day to keep us all safe. They have helped make Sudbury and Ontario one of the safest places to live, work and raise a family.

There is a growing recognition that everyone has a role to play in building partnerships, providing opportunities to prevent crime and to promote safe, healthy communities. This means our police services must form partnerships with social service, education, health and community groups to address social ills and proactively prevent crime. We all know that this is the most effective way to create positive, lasting change. For example, in my community of Sudbury, we have seen the positive impact of the strong partnerships between the Greater Sudbury Police Service and local service providers to proactively address these kinds of issues.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what he is doing to support the development of community safety planning across Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Sudbury for the important question.

Speaker, as we work to build stronger, safer and healthier communities right across Ontario, one of the key challenges is addressing social issues that lead to crime. Our proceeds of crime front-line policing grant helps form partnerships between local police services and social service providers to do just that.

This year, Ontario is investing \$2 million in 25 community safety and well-being programs to support local police and community groups in their efforts to build safer and stronger communities. For example, the St. Thomas and Aylmer police services are working to help police connect with seniors to combat elder abuse. Peterborough Police Service is increasing access to safe housing. Through the OPP Prince Edward county detachment, we are making sure that our kids stay safe online. Through the Cornwall police service, we're providing counselling and other services to combat domestic violence and help those affected by it.

In fact, this year Ontario is investing \$100,000 in the second phase of the crime prevention through social

development program in Sudbury to support local police and community groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you to the minister for his response.

I am pleased to hear about the important contribution the proceeds of crime front-line policing grant is making to community safety and well-being initiatives in Sudbury and across our great province. As the minister mentioned, the grant will go to funding phase 2 of the crime prevention through social development program. This initiative is being led by the community safety and well-being planning steering committee, which is made up of important local service groups. Their goal is to come together to build a collective crime reduction strategy and improve overall community safety and well-being, to prevent crime and address social issues in the community.

But Ontarians need to know that good work like this is also happening in communities across this province. So, through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain what he is doing to encourage other communities to develop the same sort of community safety and well-being initiatives that we have in Sudbury?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we are working to ensure that the good work that is happening in Sudbury will also happen in other neighbourhoods and communities across the province. That is why the cornerstone of our new Strategy for a Safer Ontario will be community safety and well-being plans, which will be in every part of the province. These plans will help to lower the demand for reactive, resource-intensive emergency responses by developing a collaborative and evidence-based approach to community safety.

I would like to recognize those communities from across the province which are already taking steps to make the province an even safer place to live by putting these kinds of plans in place, because the only way to truly fight crime is to prevent it from happening in the first place. These are the kinds of proactive and collaborative efforts we will continue to encourage through our community safety and well-being plans as we work to build stronger and safer communities across Ontario.

We thank communities like Sudbury, which has taken a leadership role in setting up an example of how this proactive model could work.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs—clearly a minister who should be fighting for farmers at the cabinet table. We have dairy farmers here today. However, the minister has sat idly by while now 174 municipalities, the vast majority of them rural, have passed resolutions opposing the sale of Hydro One. The minister himself has said that we will keep Hydro One “in public hands.”

Speaker, when will the minister speak up at the cabinet table to keep Hydro One in public hands?

Hon. Jeff Leal: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It's a strange question, coming from a member of that party. As we all know in this House, in the 2014 election, that party campaigned in favour of broadening the ownership of Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. Not only that, they indicated that rates would be protected through the Ontario Energy Board. Not only that, the present leader of that party has essentially said the same thing.

So when will that party disavow themselves of the commitment they made in the 2014 election campaign?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture is sitting over here, silent—sitting idly and silent, I might say—with respect to the Hydro One fire sale while rural municipalities pass resolution after resolution opposing it. Among the now 174 municipalities that oppose this sale are the ag minister's own Peterborough county and Peterborough itself.

In the past, Minister Leal opposed privatization: "We'll never look at" it. His constituents oppose the sale; the farmers his ministry represents oppose the sale.

My question: When will the minister finally represent farmers at the cabinet table—I'm not referring to other cabinet ministers—and oppose the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Rural municipalities want infrastructure. They've said it over and over again. If they look at the results of the recent federal election campaign, the country, in every province, said it wants infrastructure. That's why they got the result that they did for a party that was promising infrastructure.

We did a lot of consultation, and the mayors, one after the other, said that they need infrastructure. We have a \$130-billion infrastructure program, over 10 years, led by the Premier. That is real change in terms of meeting the infrastructure deficit.

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The \$4 billion that will go to infrastructure from broadening the ownership of Hydro One is \$4 billion that will not come from taxpayers' money, will not come from cuts and will not come from borrowing. It's sound fiscal management.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENT

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. Manufacturing is part of the foundation of our community in Oshawa. Consecutive Liberal governments, however, have stayed seated on the sidelines while auto jobs have disappeared, and our community has lost hundreds of millions of dollars in auto investment.

Now, the Premier has endorsed the TPP sight unseen—a secret deal that is expected to put approximately 20,000 jobs in the auto industry at risk. In fact, this past weekend, the CEO of Ford Canada said, "We see [the Trans-Pacific Partnership] as a setback...."

Premier, what do you have to say to the thousands of people in Oshawa and across the province whose jobs are

at risk because you have decided to support a deal that you haven't even seen yet?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: One of the things that's correct in the member's comments is that we haven't seen the deal yet. I think it is important for us to see the deal, but we've seen a lot of speculation about it, and the previous federal government did provide some details which, the member is right, are concerning to us in terms of the impact on our auto sector.

Now, we're not suggesting that the federal government be totally irresponsible and walk away from this incredibly huge trading block. That wouldn't be good for any Canadians or any Ontarians or any sector. But we do believe that the previous government did not do a good job when it came to negotiating on behalf of our auto sector. We were very clear about that. In fact, we've written to the federal minister. We were very clear in our comments between the Premier and the Prime Minister that they had to stand up for that sector and our agri-food sector as well.

We don't think they did a good job in negotiating the aspects with regard to auto, but at the same time, we've got to be responsible in our overall comments on the TPP because we have to think of the overall good of our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The actions of the Liberal government, or lack thereof, come with a real cost to families in my riding, making it that much harder for them to keep up or get ahead without good, stable jobs.

The TPP has significant consequences for the province. From what we do know, Canada got the wrong end of this lopsided deal. Even Stephen Harper admitted that the auto sector may not benefit from the TPP trade agreement. Now we're hearing from industry giants like Dianne Craig that not only will this deal jeopardize auto sector jobs in Ontario, but it will also negatively impact manufacturing sales. This is yet another example of the Premier's short-sighted vision for Ontario and for Ontarians.

Premier, will you reconsider your position on the TPP and ensure that good automotive jobs are protected in the province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Seriously, Mr. Speaker, the member has to pay better attention to these issues as they're developing. We are on record—publicly. We've written to the minister to ensure that it's on the record—the federal minister, the previous one—that we're standing up for the auto industry in this province. We've stood up repeatedly on this particular issue, and we will continue to.

What that sector is really concerned about as well is having a third party in this province that wants to jack up their corporate tax rates. Mr. Speaker, that's not going to help investment in auto in this province. That's going to kill jobs in Oshawa; that's going to kill jobs across this province. What they also want is to ensure they can get their auto parts to and from their plants. They can't do

that if we don't have the courage to make the investments that we need to make in infrastructure.

You can't have it both ways. If you're standing up for the auto sector, you've got to stand up for keeping them competitive from a tax perspective and competitive in terms of infrastructure as well.

NORTHERN ONTARIO DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, under Premier Wynne's leadership, our government has placed strong emphasis on supporting small, rural and northern communities across the province.

Our government's economic plan is targeted to create jobs and spur economic growth. We're focused on investing in people, investing in infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate. I know our investment through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund is doing just that. Committing \$100 million annually through the NOHFC is a very clear indication that, in fact, the north is being heard.

Speaker, can the minister tell this House how our government is investing in northern Ontario communities to ensure that they have the tools they need to compete in the global market?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for that great question. You did indeed reference the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp. I'm very proud to chair that great program, a \$100-million fund annually, which has brought forward extraordinary investments in the north. In fact, over the last 10 years, we've invested over \$1 billion, which has leveraged about \$3.6 billion in thousands of projects, creating or sustaining 26,000 jobs across northern Ontario. We know how important each and every job is.

While we are incredibly proud of our continued support for public sector projects all across the north—I've often said, Speaker, that I honestly think there is not one community in northern Ontario that has not seen a successful application to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp.—we are equally proud of our government's decision 10 years ago to support private sector business expansion in our northern communities. I'll look forward to speaking about that in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the minister for his response.

No one can argue that it is small business that creates a vast majority of jobs in this province. In 2013, our government implemented strategic programs to better align with key sectors identified in the growth plan, like the business opportunity program, the Strategic Economic Infrastructure Program and the Northern Innovation Program, as well as community capacity building and internship programs.

The minister has made it clear that we're continuing to work with all of our northern organizations to keep build-

ing and creating jobs in northern Ontario. We need to support an innovative business climate across the north. Can the minister please share the status of some of the NOHFC's most recent investments when it comes to innovation and job creation in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you again to the member for the question.

There are so many examples. Just this past month, my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan and I announced the expansion of broadband in northwestern Ontario with a \$750,000 expansion partnership with Tbaytel. In the film industry, in the culture industry, \$3.4 million went into North Bay's film and television industry. One of our greatest investments—we're very proud of our investments in Sudbury's SNOLAB, where Nobel prize winner and physicist Arthur McDonald did much of his research. We're very proud of that as well.

The bottom line is that we are going to continue to invest in northern Ontario. We're doing this for larger established businesses, small and start-up businesses. We're fostering valuable work experience through our extremely successful internship program. Mr. Speaker, we're encouraging major business productivity and expansion as well as global investment in northern communities, and we're going to keep on doing that as we expand the economy in northern Ontario.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, my question is to the Attorney General. It's expected that all government departments track relevant data to identify areas that need improvement. Last week, I questioned the competency regarding lost or misplaced transcripts at the Licence Appeal Tribunal—the LAT, for short—which adjudicates home warranty disputes. In addition, in response to order table question 378, the minister stated that "for matters that proceed to a hearing, statistics are not kept regarding dispositions" at the LAT. Furthermore, Frank Denton, the ADM, stated that "homeowners ... are dissuaded from pursuing LAT appeals because the process is not transparent, is complicated, time-consuming, and unbalanced."

Speaker, why does the minister frustrate new homeowners and allow the LAT to hide data regarding case success and failure rates? Surely that is part of the problem?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I appreciate the comment coming from my friend in the opposite party, but I want to remind him that the administrative tribunals are like courts, like judges: They are independent. The member from the opposition wants me to get involved and tell them how to do their work, but I'll say this: When my friend was appointed my critic, we called him and asked him—we wanted to provide him with a briefing. To date, he has not responded to our invitation, so I would like to again invite you to a briefing. Moreover, the president of that tribunal would also like to meet with the member and answer all his questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: To correct the record, my office has never received a request from the Attorney General, but I'd be happy to go any time.

The Ministry of the Attorney General doesn't document these cases; however, the not-for-profit group Canadians for Properly Built Homes does. Over the last nine years, they found that homeowners lost 90% of the time at the LAT for their new home warranty claims.

The minister's tribunals have created a David-versus-Goliath situation for homeowners seeking remedies regarding new home warranties, and homeowners are being ripped off at this tribunal. Now, with Bill 15 passed, she will be adding auto accident disputes to this very-much-maligned and broken LAT system.

Speaker, will the minister commit to fixing the outstanding and significant problems at the LAT before she grants them authority to adjudicate and rip off auto disputes as well?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, those tribunals are independent. We have a very good chair of that tribunal. If there is concern, again, the chair of the tribunal would very much like to meet with the member opposite and hear his concerns.

Again, I reiterate the invitation. I'll ask the member to check with his staff, because it's the second time we've invited him to a briefing. So would you please check with your staff and accept our invitation to a briefing?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ECHOLOGICS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today to speak about Echologics, a company that opened its innovation site in the town of Walkerton recently. The Echologics innovation site is a detailed replica of a municipal water system and features over 2,000 feet of underground water pipe. The site will be used for the research and development of technology focused on water main leak detection and assessment of pipe conditions.

In addition to its research and development purposes, the site will also serve as a training and certification facility for engineers, field staff, business partners and utilities. This will enable field teams and operators to gain considerable experience while remaining under controlled situations.

Echologics' long-term plan is to have a permanent presence in Walkerton and to provide full-time employment opportunities in the area.

The new generation of trained professionals being educated at this site will be an important resource for municipalities in preventing water main breaks before

they occur. The average leak in a municipal water system can last up to 20 years before the effects are felt. Mitigating this problem, then, will not only decrease its associated risk but save millions of dollars for municipalities.

Echologics aims to shape the future of the water industry. I'm excited to support them as they strive to achieve this goal in Walkerton, and I'm proud to say that this is happening right at home in Huron-Bruce.

DOWNTOWN WINDSOR BUSINESS ACCELERATOR

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The Windsor area has an unemployment rate of 10.5%. However, I rise today to say that it's not all gloom and doom down our way. Let me tell you about the Downtown Windsor Business Accelerator and what they've been up to lately.

The accelerator was formed four and a half years ago. It has become the entrepreneurial hub of the region. Built in an old bingo hall, the accelerator offers turnkey office space, on-site mentoring and even free legal advice. The accelerator is home to 30 companies, and a dozen or more others have graduated to their own locations. The current members have 86 full-time employees and 68 part-time. The alumni companies report 31 full-time and 48 part-time staff. The combined revenues from these small companies already total \$3 million.

The accelerator also provides incredible support to many of our local non-profit groups. Their first high school entrepreneurial summit attracted more than 300 students, with the second planned for later this year. They've also started a youth-at-risk program where young people will be mentored and given micro-financing of up to \$3,000 to start a business.

The business accelerator created a women's entrepreneurial networking series, and more than 300 women have taken advantage of that opportunity.

The economic impact the Downtown Windsor Business Accelerator has had on our local economy is substantial, so from the Ontario Legislature, a salute on a job well done.

OCAD UNIVERSITY

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to recognize and celebrate the Ontario College of Art and Design University. It is dedicated to education and innovation. OCAD is situated in my riding of Trinity-Spadina, and it is at the heart of Toronto's art, design, and new media industries.

Recently, 99 projects by 74 OCAD students, alumni and faculty were unveiled at the Mississauga office of Mercedes-Benz Financial Services. The October 21 opening of the exhibition, titled Experiencing Perspectives, was well attended by OCAD alumni and Mercedes-Benz staff. This event highlighted their seventh year of partnership with Mercedes-Benz to encourage creativity and art appreciation in the workplace.

OCAD is a state-of-the-art institution with competitive entrance requirements, 17 undergrad programs and six grad programs. Since being founded in 1876, OCAD has evolved into a champion of cross-disciplinary education and continues to integrate emerging technology for the age of imagination.

I'm extremely proud of OCAD and Trinity-Spadina and the contributions that their students, alumni and faculty make to the community. I stand today to invite all Ontarians to acknowledge the achievements of OCAD and their continued success in the arts and design industry.

STRATFORD PERTH COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Today, I would like to recognize an example of outstanding generosity in Perth-Wellington. The Stratford Perth Community Foundation is dedicated to building strong and vibrant local communities. Since 2004, the Stratford Perth Community Foundation has distributed close to \$450,000 to area charities. That money has been donated through 45 different funds that support all types of services in Stratford, St. Marys and Perth county.

In response to a challenge issued by Governor General David Johnston to imagine the country as a smart and caring nation, the foundation has created specific funds for each community. These smart and caring community funds allow community members to donate in their hometown, with the funds remaining in that specific municipality.

On October 8, the Stratford Smart and Caring Community Fund was launched and has already received an incredibly generous kick-start. Two outstanding community leaders, Steve and Carolyn Rae, have donated \$25,000 to the Stratford Smart and Caring Community Fund. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Steve and Carolyn for their outstanding generosity. Thank you to the Stratford Perth Community Foundation's board of directors, and to Tracy, Roxy and Amanda for their dedication to our communities.

Next week, the foundation is spearheading Random Act of Kindness Day, and I look forward to participating.

JOHN AND SARAH PRUYN

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's an honour to stand today and recognize two constituents from Thorold in my riding of Welland: John Pruyn and his daughter, Sarah. John and Sarah led a cross-country bike ride this summer to tell our governments that illegally detaining a peaceful protester and ripping off his prosthetic leg in the name of justice and security is an insult to democracy in Canada.

John Pruyn, an amputee from a farm accident, recalls that while taking a break from the G20 demonstration right here, lounging on the grass of Queen's Park, they were approached by officers, ordered to get up and, when John took longer than the officers would have liked, they

were attacked. He recounts that they were assaulted and were detained in cages for over 72 hours. Worse, his prosthetic leg was ripped off and confiscated. Despite that, no charges were ever laid and no apology was ever given—no explanation, even.

After calls for a federal inquiry fell on deaf ears, both set out on bikes this summer for a four-month tour, stopping at police stations and MP offices from British Columbia right through to Prince Edward Island.

Today, I'd like to thank John and Sarah Pruyn for reminding Canadians that our charter of guaranteed rights and freedoms can never be compromised and must always be respected.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak about a great new program in my riding of York-South Weston that will allow youth from the community access to the jobs and training opportunities that are coming with the major public transit expansion projects like the Eglinton Crosstown. My community and I are glad that Metrolinx has agreed to include community benefit agreements in all their projects. These are vital for good-paying jobs for young people.

The program is called I'm Eglinton and is run by the Labour Education Centre in partnership with LIUNA Local 183 and LIUNA Local 506. It is an eight-week course which explores careers in the construction industry by providing participants with knowledge about the building trades and exposing them to real work in that field. This career development program is provided to eligible Ontario Works recipients who have grade 10 English and math or equivalent. Careers in this industry are not easy, and this program ensures that applicants will be successful for the real world.

The third program intake will start today, October 26, and more information on this program can be found on the Labour Education Centre's website.

Participants of the I'm Eglinton program will learn essential skills that will enable youth who may not have other opportunities the chance to pursue a successful career path.

GRAPE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: Saturday evening I attended, yet again, the annual Grape Harvest Festival at the Delhi Hungarian Hall in our tobacco district, a European tradition that's been carried on in that hall since 1949 in the town of Delhi and in what is now a developed Norfolk wine and grape-growing area. It's a great evening. The hall is famous for its chicken and its cabbage rolls.

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The event derives from the hard work of the grape harvest, spanning September through to November. There are many area people there from their native Hungary celebrating Hungarian wine in something like

22 different regions across the country. The Hungarian House in Delhi celebrates the same way as those do in their homeland.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, once the baskets were overflowing with fruit, they would be transported on the backs of men to the winepress and dropped into a large vat. This would have been my favourite part of the ceremony: Barefoot women jumped into the large containers and stomped the fruit. Saturday night, my EA, Bobbi Ann Dwornikiewicz, kicked those grapes to juice. She could not defend her title. Dan Wiest of SNAP almost put the vat out on the dance floor, but in the end, Norfolk Mayor Charlie Luke was crowned the new champion.

Köszönöm to Hungarian House for the hospitality.

RICHMOND GARDENS RATEPAYERS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, as elected members, we're here to improve the quality of life for the people who live in our ridings. But when I think of the people who shape the quality of life in my community, I often think of the people who volunteer their time day after day to make Etobicoke Centre even better. Today I rise in the House to recognize the important contributions of a group of people and an organization in my riding who are doing just that, the Richmond Gardens Ratepayers and Residents Association.

The association re-formed earlier this year to represent the homeowners and apartment building dwellers who live in Richmond Gardens. I had the pleasure of meeting with the association's board earlier this year and was impressed by the amount of work that they had taken on and their dedication to our community.

We discussed a number of issues that are important to the community, including the potential redevelopment of the Eglinton corridor, potential transit in the corridor, and the future of Silver Creek school and the adjoining green space.

The Silver Creek building hosts two major organizations that support children with physical and developmental challenges and special needs: the Etobicoke Children's Centre and the Silver Creek Pre-School. I visited both this year and I have to say that I was touched, not only by the children I met, but by the dedication of the teachers, the staff and the volunteers who care for them each single day.

These two organizations provide a critical service, and the adjoining green space is very important to our community. That is why I believe it is critical that these two organizations and the green space remain so that they can continue to serve our community.

I'd like to thank the Richmond Gardens Ratepayers and Residents Association, their board and their members for all their hard work and their advocacy. I look forward to working with them in the months and years to come to continue to strengthen the quality of life of the people of Etobicoke Centre.

EVENTS IN PUNJAB

Ms. Harinder Malhi: According to recent news stories, parts of India are engulfed in unrest and demonstrations against desecration of the Sikh holy book, the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This is a most unfortunate development in an otherwise peaceful, tolerant, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and law-abiding state of Punjab. One would like to strongly disassociate and condemn any such acts against any holy book or religious practices. The current state of endless demonstrations leading to violence has resulted in the loss of innocent lives.

To put an end to this most unfortunate state of unrest, I strongly urge the authorities to bring to justice the perpetrators of these current acts of cowardice, which would certainly be termed as hate crimes. One hopes that our Canadian values of inclusiveness, tolerance, and respect for each other will be reflected amongst the people.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, I want to strongly urge the appropriate authorities to help bring peace to the affected areas and, as well, to make sure that the people responsible for these cowardly acts are properly charged and punished. This is important not only to my constituents but to Sikhs living abroad and in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

SAUBLE BEACH LAND CLAIM

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are serious concerns with the government's policy involving third-parties named in land claim disputes in Ontario, namely the Sauble Beach land claim;

"Whereas the government of Ontario and the government of Canada have equally failed to include protection of the third-parties named in this land claim dispute, specifically they have abandoned any responsibility in honouring crown patent grants and in the case of Ontario, honouring the land registry system;

"Whereas there is no indication that any effort is being made to protect the interest of the public or third-parties named in the Sauble Beach land claim dispute;

"Whereas the current process concerning the dissemination of information to third-parties named in this land claim dispute is deeply flawed;

"Whereas there is no consultation with the third parties as to crown land planning and decision-making nor any engagement in a process that must be open as per the MNRF's publicly stated principles on land negotiations;

"Whereas third parties named in the land claim should be consulted and their concerns should be reflected in negotiations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to do the following:

"To review its guiding principles for land claim negotiations and the respective roles of Canada and Ontario in settling claims in an effort to enhance protection of third-parties and all citizens affected by land disputes, to provide open communication and accountability to all pertinent stakeholders, and to provide appropriate financial support to ensure this matter is dealt with in a fair and timely manner."

I support it and will send it to the Clerks' table with page Marco.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Shirley.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children and youth living with asthma.

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung

Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this petition and sign it and leave it with page Julia.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that came from Mr. Dennis Thompson in Lively, in my riding, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care, and the emergency department...;

"Whereas Ontario's provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for" at least "eight years in a row; and

"Whereas these cuts will risk higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

"Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces."

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask my good page Vanessa to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

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"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration ; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name and send it to the table with page Cameron.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site; and

"Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

"Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

"Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, to emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

"Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

"Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact."

I fully support this. I will sign my name and send it with page Abby.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have hundreds of people who have signed this petition, including Deborah Kennelly from Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page John to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are concerned about the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

"Whereas too many workers are not protected by the minimum standards outlined in existing employment and labour laws; and

"Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement a decent work agenda by making sure that Ontario's labour and employment laws:

"—require all workers be paid a uniform, provincial minimum wage regardless of a worker's age, job or sector of employment;

"—promote full-time, permanent work with adequate hours for all those who choose it;

"—ensure part-time, temporary, casual and contract workers receive the same pay and benefits as their full-time, permanent counterparts;

"—provide at least seven (7) days of paid sick leave each year;

"—support job security for workers when companies or contracts change ownership;

"—prevent employers from downloading their responsibilities for minimum standards onto temp agencies, subcontractors or workers themselves;

"—extend minimum protections to all workers by eliminating exemptions to the laws;

"—protect workers who stand up for their rights;

"—offer proactive enforcement of laws, supported by adequate public staffing and meaningful penalties for employers who violate the law;

"—make it easier for workers to join unions; and

"—require a \$15 minimum wage for all workers."

I sign this petition and leave it with page Gavin from Beaches-East York.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I support this, will sign my name and send it with page Abby.

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Donna Byron, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Health Canada, the Canadian Paediatric Society and the World Health Organization recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life with continued breastfeeding along with other food sources for up to two years ... for optimal health;

"Whereas breastfeeding is normal and natural but like childbirth it can be complicated requiring specialized support for a family's success;

"Whereas lactation consultants are trained, internationally certified breastfeeding specialists who can assist women having breastfeeding problems...;

"Whereas Brantford, until 2005 when the service was cut, had a breastfeeding clinic run by lactation consultants ... which was highly utilized;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to facilitate the reinstatement of a lactation consultant-led breastfeeding clinic in Brantford General Hospital."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Marco to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government's proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is a mandatory pension plan which would target small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas there has been little to no discussion on what the costs would be, or who would pay them; and

"Whereas affected businesses would be hit with up to \$1,643 per employee, per year in new payroll taxes starting in 2017; and

"Whereas affected employees would have up to \$1,643 per year extra deducted from their paycheques, and it would take 40 years for them to see the full pension benefits; and

"Whereas the Canadian Federation of Independent Business predicts the unemployment rate in Ontario would rise by 0.5%, and there would be a reduction in wages over the longer term; and

"Whereas all of these costs would be shouldered exclusively by small businesses and their employees; and

"Whereas public sector and big business employees who already have a pension plan will not be asked to pay into the plan;

"We, the undersigned, do not support implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and petition the government of Ontario to axe the pension tax."

I fully support it, will sign my name and send it with page Nicole.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Jeannine Kingsley, who is a resident of Hanmer in my riding. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I fully support, will affix my name to it and ask page Samuel to bring it to the Clerk.

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WATER FLUORIDATION

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I have a petition here addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I will affix my signature to this petition and hand it over to Soham.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 5, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Chiarelli has moved second reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a deferral note from the deputy government whip asking that this vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time for deferred votes.

I have to inform the House that I have been advised that it requires a written notification from the chief government whip to defer the vote. Therefore, call in the members; again, a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1333 to 1337.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have received a request for a deferral from the chief whip of the third party. As such, this vote will be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to first of all thank the chief whips for the government, opposition and third party for their assistance. I'm going to now ask for government notice of motion 42.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe I have to move the motion, Speaker.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy; and,

That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 5, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Toronto for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 113:

- notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the Legislative Assembly's website and Canada NewsWire; and

- that the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Tuesday, November 3, 2015; and

- that witnesses be scheduled to appear before the committee on a first-come, first-served basis; and

- that each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members; and

- that the deadline for written submissions be 6 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2015; and

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2015; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 19, 2015, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Thursday, November 19, 2015, from 6:45 p.m. to 9 p.m., in Toronto, for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Thursday, November 19, 2015, at 4 p.m., those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. At this time, the Chair shall allow one 20-minute waiting period, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Monday, November 23, 2015. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours of debate shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The votes on second and third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 42. I look to the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak on this motion.

I really want to stress that this is a very important piece of legislation that has been championed by both policing and civil liberties partners and all three political parties represented in the House.

While many police forces have already adopted the learned guideline, which is voluntary in nature, it is important that we put this legislation in place quickly to ensure that no more non-conviction records are being released across our province. It is also important, for consistency across the province, that we provide a clear definition to Ontarians of what a police record check entails. This legislation will protect individual civil liberties while keeping our province safe as we work to build stronger communities across Ontario.

There are a number of stakeholders who have championed this legislation and have worked very hard over

the last few years and were consulted in the development of this bill. I want to mention a few: For example, the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, the John Howard Society, the African Canadian Legal Clinic and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Mental Health Association and, of course, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have been very supportive of this legislation.

I have been listening to the debate in this House on Bill 113, and I'm very heartened to see that all parties have stated in the Legislature during second reading that they will be supporting this bill. In fact, Christine Elliott, the former member for Whitby-Oshawa, recognized the need for these reforms as well, telling the Toronto Star: "The privacy issues are so important here and can have a huge impact on people's lives. People shouldn't be held back by information that may or may not be relevant to a police check that isn't criminal in nature. I think we need discussion around that and I think there's wide support for that within the party.... I think a review is long overdue."

During second reading debate, the member for Huron-Bruce stated: "We, too, on this side of the House, as opposition, support the right of all Ontarians to be treated fairly and equally. We support this legislation because it brings consistency to police record checks, based on recommendations by Ontario police chiefs, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and other groups."

Similarly, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton stated: "I must commend the government on bringing forward this bill. It's rare that opposition does that, but this is an important bill. It addresses a very important issue, and I do acknowledge the government's work in introducing a bill that addresses such a serious issue."

Speaker, it's heartening to see, again, support from all three parties who have recognized the work that not only the government has done in drafting this bill but, of course, the work, most importantly, that all our policing and civil liberties partners have done. It is they who actually did a lot of heavy lifting in making sure that the learned guidelines, which are voluntary in nature, address this particular issue. But they also insisted that the government bring in legislation in keeping with the learned guidelines so that the requirements outlined become mandatory across the province and we have a consistent practice across the province for all police services when it comes to disclosure of information in a police record check.

Speaker, as you may recall, this issue actually came up during the last election, and all three party leaders, at that time, including our Premier, spoke to the need to address this issue and look into it.

After the election, when the government was formed, the Premier asked me, through the mandate letter, to develop this legislation. We worked very hard, and within our first year we were able to, with the support of all our partners, table this bill. That's why it is that much more important that we pass this bill into law as soon as

possible: because it will allow our police services across the province to develop appropriate procedures consistent with the legislation, but also, of course, for our civil liberties partners to inform Ontarians as to what their rights are under this bill.

The voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June when it comes to the mandate of this government and this particular bill. They wanted our government to get on with the business of governing in their best interests.

There has been considerable debate on this bill and the ideas in this bill. We have heard a wide range of viewpoints, opinions and perspectives, most of them in support of this bill, with some suggestions for improvement within the committee, which is absolutely appropriate. That's why it is time, we feel, that we end second reading and refer this bill to committee. In committee, the stakeholders, of course, will be able to present their views. We'll be able to hear directly from the public their thoughts on the bill—not to mention, members will have an opportunity to move amendments to the bill to further strengthen and improve this important piece of legislation.

At the same time, this House can move to other substantive debate on other important matters. There are a number of important pieces of legislation that have already been introduced that the government would like to debate in the House and move through the legislative process; for example, Bill 85, which is the good government act; Bill 109, which is the employment and labour statute act; Bill 115, which is the Electoral Boundaries Act; and Bill 122, which is the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act.

Speaker, we'd like to spend our time debating some of those other important pieces of legislation currently before the House but we cannot until Bill 113 is dealt with. That's why I'm speaking in support of this particular motion and urge all members to support this motion: so that we can take Bill 113 to the committee stage, get our partners to come and present their views and, of course, entertain important amendments that other members will present as well, so that we can get down the road of making Bill 113 a reality, hopefully with the approval of this House at third reading debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm happy to follow the minister today.

I find myself speaking this afternoon to a time allocation motion. I believe there was a time when these time allocation motions were rare, but this government has made them quite routine in the Legislature. Today, it's for Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform Act.

I'll be speaking for about 10 minutes, and I know the members from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will also be adding their comments to this debate.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into my remarks on the time allocation, the minister said there are other good bills that we should be discussing in the House. It's interesting: He

didn't mention once legislation that talks about an economic plan for Ontario—nothing about creating private sector jobs; nothing about reducing taxes, making life more affordable in the province of Ontario. It's very unfortunate that today in the Legislature and for the last number of days, we continue to hear about certain pet projects that this government has undertaken in secrecy. One example of that—and I think our leader, Patrick Brown, did a great job in question period today talking about the millions of dollars given to teachers' unions secretly. We need to be dealing with legislation that creates jobs in Ontario and really sends a signal that we want Ontario to be competitive again.

1350

Regarding Bill 113, there has been thoughtful and productive debate on this bill, and it's a shame that the government feels the need to choke off that debate. This bill was brought forward because the system we have in place has failed a lot of people. There is a real need for this legislation and a real interest from everyone in this House in passing into law measures which will address the issues I'm sure we've all heard from our constituents in communities right across the province.

Bill 113 has the potential to expedite the process of enabling volunteers to serve their communities, and prospective employees to get to work. I understand a lot of time has been dedicated to finding solutions to ensure that we address the problems with the current system, but now the government wants to rush it through the legislative process. I think this is an important piece of legislation that we need to get right and that deserves the benefit of the full democratic legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that this government loves to say how great it is to consult and have conversations with everyone about everything, right up until its public debate in this House. The democratic process is not just about the conversations you have in stakeholder meetings; it's about having unfettered debate in this House, in this assembly, with every elected representative having the opportunity to speak on behalf of their constituents.

For Bill 113 in particular, I think it is completely inappropriate to limit debate. There are a number of ways in which this bill inserts politicians into the administration of justice, and that raises some red flags. We're talking about balancing public safety and civil liberties, and when that is the question of the day, robust debate should be the order of the day.

My colleague from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington did an excellent job last week of highlighting issues of concern. Frankly, I heard no satisfactory answers from the government side to the questions he raised, so clearly there is more discussion needed here: either an acknowledgement from the government side that there are some questionable elements to this bill that will need to be revised or an explanation as to why it is necessary for the government to insert itself into the administration of justice.

I'd like to revisit some of these issues, to underscore why debate needs to continue for Bill 113.

To begin with, section 22(1) allows cabinet to exempt anyone from any provision of this bill, so cabinet essentially has full discretion on who this bill actually applies to. They can pick and choose who is subject to the rule of law. Those are some very broad powers which this government is bestowing on cabinet. What is the oversight here? Will there be a nonpartisan party who will be made aware of who is exempted and why, and then be empowered to take some sort of action if this is ever abused?

Along the same line, section 19(3) says, "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister's consent," so every charge will need the seal of approval of the minister. Why is this included? It's a highly unusual clause and it warrants a thorough explanation, which we have yet to hear in this House. I want to see this debate continue so we can hear from the minister himself why he needs to sign off on every prosecution under this particular section.

Then there is section 22(2)(c), which allows the minister to create new offences under this act. Of course we support this legislation, which is long overdue, to bring consistency to police record checks, and I understand that the offences which this bill establishes are based on recommendations by Ontario's police chiefs, the Ontario Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and other groups, but going forward, it will be at the minister's discretion to determine what might be considered an offence under this particular act, without the involvement of this House. Before legislative oversight is removed entirely from the process of evaluating this act and the issue it seeks to address, I think we should ensure that all concerns, opinions and explanations are thoroughly aired. When the government is putting forward provisions like this, there is a need for a full and serious debate. The minister himself has said that this bill is about ensuring there is fairness, clarity and consistent practice right across the province, but the discretionary powers of cabinet and the minister that this bill allows for seem inconsistent with that particular goal.

The fact of the matter is that we have a majority government here in Ontario that will vote through whatever legislation they please. At committee, they will ignore 99% of the amendments put forward by the opposition, and they will remake the laws to suit their purposes.

The very least they can do is keep up appearances by allowing unfettered debate to run its course before they bequeath themselves a new set of powers. To limit debate in these circumstances, it's really this government coming clean on how little they value the process of this House and the voices of the people of this province who elected opposition members. There are questions that should be asked and answered before this bill moves forward.

Mr. Speaker, the people of this province are taking notice of this government's disrespect of the democratic process. In fact, I'd like to quote an article from the Toronto Star from earlier this year: "It's a government

that uses omnibus bills to ram through controversial new measures—and then limits debate on them.

"Its leader says one thing during an election campaign and then, once in office, surprises voters with something entirely different.

"It is routinely scolded by watchdog officials for its lacklustre approach to public accountability.

"And no, it is not the federal Conservative government of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, the man critics like to call mean and reactionary.

"Rather it is the Ontario Liberal government of Premier Kathleen Wynne, the personable grandmother who won office last year as a political progressive."

Or, Mr. Speaker, there is this quote from CBC News for the government to consider: "It turns out there are actually two Kathleen Wynnes.

"There's the minority Premier promising to be 'new and different' and 'open and transparent.'

"And there's the majority Premier who appears to have all but wiped those four words from her political vocabulary."

This article goes on and says: "Wynne's approach—often echoed by her cabinet ministers—is now more of: we won, you didn't."

"And as a result, she wants legislation passed quickly, limiting debate...."

Speaker, I hope the government is aware that these manoeuvres are not going unnoticed. This is a pattern of behaviour of disrespect for the process of this place. It's arrogance, and the media and the public are picking up on it.

This is legislation that is needed, but to skip due process risks creating problematic and substandard legislation. The minister himself has said Bill 113 is all about protecting individual civil liberties and public safety. I believe that the legislative process is in place to do exactly that. It is in the public interest that we debate this bill and all bills thoroughly and that, as opposition, we continue to seek answers to our concerns about this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in the beginning, there will be other of my colleagues who will be speaking to the time allocation motion later.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, yet again, here we are debating another time allocation motion. I've just got to say, if there is a bad way of dealing with how you process legislation through this Legislature, this is one of them. The Legislature is supposed to be about what? It's supposed to be about the people of Ontario. One of the ways that you do that—it's not necessarily giving me the right to debate a bill at length in the Legislature, although that is a right of members and that's what Parliament is about; it's about giving any member of the House of whatever side the ability to speak to whatever bill is being called.

But the bigger issue is what doesn't happen in committee, because in the end, it should really be about

the people of Ontario. It should be about their right and their ability to access committees not just here at Queen's Park, but access committees on the road as committees are travelling around the province, to be able to speak on bills of substance. For example, there are a number of bills before the House now that are somewhat controversial. The big one for us, obviously, is hydro, the privatization of Ontario hydro when the government brought in their budget bill. We think that it would have been fairer for the government to at least have travelled that bill throughout the province for a period of time—not forever—to be able to give the public the opportunity to have their say.

We're here spending their money, Mr. Speaker. It's the people of Ontario who pay the taxes. Our job, once we receive those taxes, is to carefully and with some thought figure out a budget and be able to spend that in some way that reflects the respect that we should give our constituents. Well, how can you do that if you don't give the public the opportunity to come before committees? That's a problem with time allocation.

1400

A government is very, very—how would you say—prone, when they use the tool of time allocation, to limit the amount of time a bill will be in committee. Typically, when a bill is referred to committee, we see this government give it two, three or four days at the most of hearings and clause-by-clause, and then the bill is back into the House for a couple of hours of debate at third reading. Well, it shouldn't be that way.

It used to be that there were no time allocation procedures here. The only thing you were able to do when I was first elected here was call the question, which meant that the parties had to work together, even though they were a majority government, such as the Davis government, the Peterson government and the Rae government. Those governments, in majority, had to work with the opposition to be able to move their agenda through the House. So, yes, there were some trade-offs.

You know, the government of the day would have a bill—I remember when we were government that the big one was our first budget. When we went to the first budget in 1991, as everybody knows, there was a deficit within the budget of about \$8.5 billion at that time. We raised it by \$2 billion in order to stimulate the economy with infrastructure and the wage protection fund, for a total of around an \$11-billion deficit. The Conservatives, at the time, said, "We are opposed to deficits," which was their right.

They wanted to have the bill travel, so that the public could have their say when it came to that budget. So they used every trick in the book that they had to be able to stand in the House to slow the House down, in order to put pressure on the then Bob Rae NDP government, to give that bill some time in committee.

Well, the government had to back down. The government had to accept that the opposition, even though they were the third party, in that case—they weren't even the official opposition; they were the third party—had the

right as a party to be able to say, "We want to travel that bill." You were there, Mr. Speaker, because you were elected the same year I was. By the way, congratulations; we just went through our 25th anniversary—youself and Mr. Wilson—sometime back last fall.

What happened was that the government had to back down and give—I don't remember how long it was, but I think it was a couple of weeks of hearings on the budget bill—not the pre-budget consultation, but actually on the budget bill—across Ontario. You know what? The government heard some things that it didn't particularly like. Some of them we accepted; some of them we did not. We got some good ideas that we eventually brought into the next budget, which came in 1992, but that's the process of the public having its say.

When governments use the time allocation tool that has been here since 1993—and I take no pride in being the government that brought time allocation to this Legislature; as I look back at it, it was probably the worst thing we could have done—what it does is it takes away the incentive to negotiate agreements about how legislation goes through the House. Parliament, if you look at it, I think is fascinating. I'm probably one of the few in this Legislature who really likes reading procedural stuff and the history of the House and the history of the British Parliament. Over a period of, you know, a couple of hundred years, we developed a role for Parliament that essentially is that we have a responsibility to not just represent our constituents, but to allow due process in that entire parliamentary process.

Yes, this Legislature is about appropriating dollars so that the government—the executive—can run the province. We have a budget of around \$130 billion a year. The province, through its cabinet, makes a decision about how it's going to spend that money, but then they've got to come to House and get the appropriation from the Legislature to be able to spend that money. There are processes in there in order to allow that there is clear transparency that allows free discussion, so that we're able to give the public their say in how we're going to spend their money, and what the policies in the budget will or will not be. This is not a budget bill, but I use that as an example that using time allocation very much diminishes the ability to negotiate agreements when it comes to the legislation going forward.

If you look at this order paper, Mr. Speaker—and I know you have—it's pretty thin gruel; there's not a lot on this order paper. It's not like the government has reams of legislation and a whole bunch of controversial bills. Most of these bills were drafted prior to the federal election. They were pretty mundane, except for a couple of them, in order not to rock the boat too much, going into a federal election, which was a smart strategy on the part of the Liberal government, because they didn't want to give their federal party any hiccups.

As it turns out, that plan worked really well for them, to my chagrin.

The point is, there's not a lot on this order paper that the government shouldn't be able to negotiate a way

forward to decide how long some bills will be in the House for debate and in exchange for how long we're going to have them in committee, when it comes to certain bills, to be negotiated. That's the way this place should work. It should be that the government has—I'll just pick a number out of the air—20 pieces of legislation; there's probably half of them that all parties support, both the official opposition and the third party. Those bills are probably without much need of debate because they're supported. The bigger issue is to get them into committee so the public can have their say.

In exchange for doing that, maybe you would debate a bill that you have a little bit more, let's say, opposition to. I'm sure the Conservatives have bills that they would like to have a little bit more time on in the House to make their points, in order to try to convince the government to make some form of amendment or withdrawal on the bill, and the government then has to or not take that advice from the opposition. But the big thing is, if we did it the way it should be, there would be a real negotiation amongst the House leaders that allows us a way forward to move an agenda forward of the government in a way that allows the public to have their say. That's what this place is all about.

Instead, what we've got is a government that is essentially ruling by time allocation. Pretty well everything in the Legislature now is time-allocated through this House, and I don't believe that that serves any real good purpose when it comes to giving the public their say, but, more importantly, being able to do a good job when it comes to drafting legislation, understanding the legislation and amending it, if necessary.

I want to give you an example of where governments get in trouble when it comes to not giving legislation enough time. Back in the days when Mike Harris was Premier—and this is not meant as a shot to my friends in the Conservative Party; it only illustrates the issue. The government believed there needed to be a change to the assessment system. We in government, as the NDP, had gone to market value. The opposition was opposed to it at the time, so they decided when they became government, they would move it from market value to actual value. Fair enough. They ran an election. They got more seats than everybody else, and they had the right as a government to propose and put forward any bill they wanted.

But when the bill came forward, I was opposed, as were other people in the opposition, because we felt that it was so darned hard to move us to market value in the first place that we'd be reopening a can of worms to get into actual value. To do what—essentially to have market value by the back door, which is now called "actual value," at the time, so we thought it was a bit of waste of legislative time.

The other thing is, there were problems in the way the legislation was drafted. I don't remember, Speaker, if you were on that committee—because we did travel that bill at that time. The government agreed that the bill be travelled. I think we went mostly to southern Ontario, if I remember correctly. I was on that particular committee

and I remember listening to the public who came before us. We had people from municipalities, who knew a lot about municipal assessment, who came forward and said, "Hey, there's a problem with this bill. This doesn't work. This particular clause is unmanageable." We took note of that.

When we got to Committee of the Whole and we got into amendments, we put forward amendments in order to fix the problems with the bill, and the government refused all changes. The government just took it the way it was, and the problem was—and we had said it at the time—that once the bill is passed, we guarantee that the government was going to have to amend its own legislation because this ain't going to work when it gets down to municipalities to work with. Well, so be it.

Less than a year later, the government had to come back with another bill—and if I remember correctly, and the Clerks may want to send me a note and let me know what the number was, but I think we amended that original bill three times by legislation afterwards over a period of around six or seven years, all because we did not take the time necessary to give good scrutiny to the bill to make sure that in fact the bill at least was manageable when it came to the way it was drafted.

So when you time-allocate, you get into those problems because, in that particular case, that bill had been time-allocated out of second reading and it was time-allocated into committee and we had a very limited time in committee, although we did travel, to be able to hear what the public had to say.

1410

When the government comes forward on a bill, like today, that, in fact—given some changes, this bill could be supported. There are some changes that we're going to recommend when this bill goes to committee, because we think the bill is a useful bill, it's a step in the right direction, but there are some problems in the way this particular bill is drafted. We're hopeful that we can get amendments when we get the bill into committee. But, again, how are you giving the public an opportunity to be able to do what it's got to do and to give them their role, to be able to come before committee and have something to say, if you don't allow that to happen by way of this motion? How many days of public hearings does it have in the motion? Two days?

Mr. John Vanthof: One.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: One day? There's only one day of public hearings. What's that? This bill, if it's as good as the government says, which is dealing with energy marketers, well, then give the bill some time out in the public so that the public and those people in the industry who are affected are able to come before us and tell us what's good and bad about the bill, and what they think has to be changed. Unfortunately, it's pretty hard to do that when you only have one day of committee time in the Legislature as a result of what the government is putting forward.

I just wanted to get on the record—and I know our whip is going to want to do the same, as well as the member from Oshawa—and yet again say that it's a sad

thing that we've gone down this road of time allocation because now, it is virtually—every majority government moves on time allocation when it comes to pretty well everything, and as a result, it's really the public that is getting frozen out, because the public is not getting their ability to come before a committee and to have their say when it comes to legislation that is before this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Here we go again. Nothing changed much from last week, but it has gotten worse. We've lowered the bar—descended it lower than ever before. You see, when we started this session of Parliament, we knew that time allocation was going to be the order of the day, and it has been. But, you know, they were bringing time allocation in—the first time we heard it this fall, it was, like, after 13 hours of debate. After 13 hours of debate, the government moved time allocation—that's one thing. After 6.5 hours of debate, the government has a right to end debate, but they usually choose not to because they're expected to give members of this assembly the opportunity to comment on legislation. That's what we're sent here to do.

On this particular bill, Bill 113, which this time allocation refers to, our caucus has had four members speak to it—four. Four out of 27 have spoken to this bill. Is that representative of all of the areas of Ontario that we happen to be elected to represent? My answer, the short answer, would be no. That is what really concerns me, because the message that we're getting here—and I've tried to appeal to the members on the other side using one form of debate, and I have been clearly unsuccessful. I'm going to try to appeal to the fair-mindedness of the members on the other side and hope that somehow they actually take notice.

The legal minimum in this chamber is 6.5 hours of debate, yet this government has moved for time allocation after six hours and 51 minutes. That's a new low for even this government to move to time allocation. It has changed dramatically.

I remember when I came here in 2003. The Liberals had been elected with a much stronger majority than they have today, but they did not resort to time allocation like this, like the Wynne government has resorted to. This is unprecedented. I remember, when I was a young member here—well, I don't know if I was that young, but I was new—that in 2003, we travelled on almost every bill. I was a member of the general government committee at that time, and almost every bill that came before our committee, we took it to the people of Ontario to give them an opportunity to comment in their own locales.

When we took those bills on committee, we usually had 20 minutes: The deputant appearing before the committee would have 15 minutes to speak and the committee would have five minutes to ask questions. If you look at most of the bills that do get to committee today, all the committee hearings are here in Toronto. Like for this bill here, the time allocation motion provides for all the hearings to be here at the Legislature—

no travel across the province, yet this will affect every citizen in the province of Ontario. For the people who appear before the committee, it looks like they'll have five minutes to speak: five minutes to speak for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from the committee members; a total of 14 minutes, nine of them being from the members of the committee themselves. So somebody is supposed to come here to Toronto, take the time out of their busy lives and make a presentation to this committee in five minutes. That is absolutely ridiculous, but if you look at the last time allocation motion, that's exactly what it provided for. In Bill 112's time allocation motion: five minutes for witnesses and nine minutes for members of the committee to ask questions.

This government has become the most closed in the history of the province of Ontario. They talked about openness. They talked about transparency. They talked about governing for the people. With the plaudits for the throne speech of 2014, you would think this was going to be a new era of co-operation in this Legislature, and it could have been. It could have been, but the government has taken arrogance to a new level. In every way possible, they're trying to shut down everyone else from the debate. That is truly regrettable, that we would have that kind of stifling of debate in this Legislature. Even Dalton McGuinty, when he was Premier, with a large majority—I think it was 72 seats in the first election, or something like that. With 72 seats, he recognized that the opposition played an important role, and he gave that ability to the opposition.

If the government wants to talk about getting legislation through, they need to talk about it at House leaders. And it can't be just a five-minute meeting on a Thursday afternoon to go over the next week's schedule; they need to sit down, have a real conversation between the House leaders about what really is important and set some time aside for each of the respective parties. What is necessary to be debated for a longer period of time and what can be debated over shorter periods of time? We don't have that opportunity. It's not being afforded to us, so all of a sudden, out of the blue, time and time again, as my friend from Timmins–James Bay says—and I congratulate him, as well as Messrs. Wilson and Arnott, on 25 years in Legislature in this Legislature, which I guess took place—when was that, in June?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: September 6.

1420

Mr. John Yakabuski: September 6: 25 years. I won't be here 25 years, so you'll never have that opportunity to congratulate me for that number. I'll be too old.

Anyway, he talked about how it has changed. It seems that every bill today is being put through this time allocation procedure. Some of this could be avoided if there was a real conversation between the House leaders about what is important and what is not important.

I'm asking this government, I'm asking these people on the other side, to truly consider the other side. Do you, members of this party—the Liberal governing party—truly believe that you have had a fair debate when four

members of the official opposition have had an opportunity to talk about a particular piece of legislation? If you really believe that, then we don't need debate at all. If you really believe that four members of the opposition is sufficient, then you must believe that debate is not necessary at all. If you do, say so.

Why don't you stand in your place and tell the people of Ontario that there is no need whatsoever to debate in this chamber, that the government knows best and they'll just make the laws and push them through, because that is essentially what you're telling us. We elected 27 people—and one vacancy—to this House for the very same reasons that you were elected: because the people in your riding felt that you were the ones best suited to speak for them in this chamber. But in the case of our members, we're not getting to speak.

You have to remember: The rules are the rules. The way the speaking lineup is set out, the opening speeches on each particular bill—what we call the leadoff speeches—are given one hour of time. The subsequent ones are 20 minutes, and they eventually go down to 10 minutes. But if you think of three hours of debate, that really only covers three people. Now, it can be divided, but at the same time, in the case of the opposition, this is sometimes the only opportunity for our critics to speak to a bill. Sometimes it might be split in two, but many times the critic will speak for the entire hour.

So out of 6.5 hours, potentially three of them could be used by three speakers, and 3.5 hours are supposed to represent the other 104 in this chamber? Hardly. That's what I ask the members to actually consider: to actually ask themselves if this is a proper way of allowing this chamber to work, that 107 members get 6.5 hours, of which three hours could potentially be used by three persons. Do you really believe that? Then you must believe that debate is completely unnecessary and that we should dispense with it. We might as well dispense with it, because that's exactly what you're doing here when you continue to implement time allocation.

It's funny. I know that the third party have been through this. We were through it. The McGuinty government was through it. But this Wynne government has taken it to new heights. You have to ask yourself—it is a very pertinent question, Speaker: If this procedure continues to escalate like it is escalating under this government, what will be left? What will be left when it comes to real, complete, wholesome debate on any given subject in this House?

Now, this particular bill, Bill 113—my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex raised a couple of significant concerns. I'd like to know more about that. I haven't had a chance to speak to the bill, and technically, today, I'm not speaking to the bill; I'm speaking to the time allocation motion. This bill that we're time-allocating is a police records check bill. I'll just give you the full name of it here: An Act respecting police record checks, tabled by the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. First reading was on June 3.

Under this new bill, Bill 113, if you look at subsection 19(3), "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this

section without the minister's consent," and further, in subsection 22(1), "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations, (a) exempting any person or class of persons from any provision of this act and attaching conditions to the exemption."

Well, you have to ask yourself: If I read this correctly, the way it is written, this whole thing is at the pen of the minister. The minister can exempt anybody he wants from the provisions of this act. So are you required, then, under this act, to obey the law or just be on good terms with the minister? Because even if you're in contravention of this act, it says, "A prosecution shall not be commenced under this section without the minister's consent."

So if the police or whoever want to charge me under this act because I've contravened it, they can't, because the minister—not that the minister would protect me. But it would be up to him to decide whether or not I could be prosecuted. Can you find me some other statutes here, laws in this province, that say the police have to go to the minister for a decision to be made on whether they can be charged? Can you imagine what kind of a mess we would have in this province if the minister had to give his or her consent for a charge to be laid?

That's something that perhaps more discussion or a discussion at committee could help clear the air on, or maybe it's a provision that the government need not proceed with implementing in this bill. But again, it speaks to the change in attitude of this government over previous governments: how they believe they are so righteous in whatever they do that there's no need to get the second side, no need to get the views of those who are elected from another party. Well, I think that's wrong, and I think you people over there know it's wrong too.

Unfortunately, we all know how this British parliamentary system works. There are only two kinds of people in it: those who are in cabinet and those who want to be in cabinet. If you're in cabinet and you don't toe the line, you'll be one of those people who want to be in cabinet. If you're one of those people who want to be in cabinet and don't toe the line, you can rest assured that you're never going to be in cabinet. Here we have a centralized power system where the Premier's office controls the minions in the party. Those who are elected to serve their constituents cannot do so to their heart, because they must follow the law that is passed in the Premier's office. That is a challenge for them, but I know, in their heart of hearts—because I see them. I'm looking over there and I see their eyes and I can see inside their hearts, and they know this is wrong. They know cutting off debate in this fashion is wrong. It is wrong for them, it is wrong for the people of Ontario, and it shouldn't be taking place. It should not be taking place.

Yet when I talk about—and you know me; I'm not one to stray off the subject at all if I can. But when we talk about changes in the government's attitudes, I think what we've heard and read in the *Globe and Mail* over the last couple of days is an amazing illustration of how this

government feels about how answerable it is for its actions to the people of Ontario. It scoffs at the idea that the people of Ontario—and I'll tell you, it's the thing we all heard about more than any other subject since it was revealed by the *Globe and Mail* and then spoken about in this Legislature, and that is how they could somehow feel that it's okay for them to say, "Oh, it's been a tough negotiation. We'll pay some or all of your expenses. Here's a cheque for a million. Here's another one to someone else for a million, and you get half a million," whatever it is.

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The idea that a government could just say, "We can do whatever we want. We're the Liberal government here in the province of Ontario. We're not answerable to anybody. Who's going to do anything about it? We have a majority. The Conservatives can't stop us. New Democrats can't stop us. We'll do whatever we want." It's going to be the pizza scandal—that's what they'll call it this time, or whatever—the sliced pepperoni scandal of 2015 is going to be maybe the story at some point. But someday we'll get to the bottom of this as to what happened, because the Premier has continually been asked the question, "Where did the money come from? Where did the money come from? Where did the money come from?" and she has continuously dodged the question.

I'm going to let that go at this point because we are speaking to the time allocation motion—and I only have a few seconds left—but I want to you think about this: To the people on the other side, I want to you go to your caucus meeting tomorrow—I believe your caucus meeting is tomorrow, like ours is—and I want you to talk to your cabinet ministers, I want you to talk to your House leader and I want you to talk to your Premier, and I want you to tell them that you believe that this practice of taking the guillotine to this Legislature and cutting off debate is wrong. We can do better, we should do better, and I ask you to think about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House. Today, it's not a joyous time for me as whip of the third party because time allocation of any bill is a very serious issue, and for this bill particularly.

When people participate in an election and they elect a majority or a minority government, they expect that, after the election, the parliamentary process will take place and both sides will come up with the best legislation possible. The fact that this government continually limits debate and allocates the time that people can speak—because all the members of this House have different backgrounds and different points of view, and many of these points of view could add to the debate of this legislation—of any legislation, but this legislation in particular.

In our caucus of 20 members, we've had three members who have had the opportunity to speak in this debate. As whip, I'm sure I have other members who

would like to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people they represent, who may have had experiences with things that happened with police record checks, before this legislation is being implemented, who would have added to this debate. And, Speaker, that is probably not the most egregious part.

The most egregious part of time allocation is that it's not only the members who are democratically elected who have their time to speak cut off, but also the committee process is shortened. I have heard—it's a legend in this place that I have never really experienced—that committees actually travelled outside of Toronto and that this province was actually bigger than downtown Toronto.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It is?

Mr. John Vanthof: So I've been told; I've travelled a lot through this province going home.

But in these time allocation processes the hearings are very short. You can sign up if you want to speak to this issue. You can sign up from my riding. You'll have to travel to Toronto, and if you're lucky, you'll get—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Take the train.

Mr. John Vanthof: The train that we no longer have.

If you're lucky, you can get to speak for five minutes. I've watched these processes; I've participated in a few. They're not kidding, Speaker, as you well know. They're not kidding about the five minutes.

If you have a very relevant issue to speak on, on this legislation, and it happens to take seven minutes or 10 minutes, you know what? Not important. You're done. Five minutes, and the gavel drops. In the case of someone from my riding who wants to come and speak to this committee, it will take you two days' travelling—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To get five minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: —for five minutes, maybe. And this legislation is supposed to represent all the people of Ontario.

First, we have people here, elected from across the province. The first thing this government claims to do—they claim to be open and transparent. The first thing they do is take each piece of legislation and use time allocation so the majority of the members—at least, by far the majority of the opposition members—are not allowed to speak. That's not good enough. Then they make the committee process so that it doesn't travel. Then they very much restrict the people who have the financial means, the financial ability and, quite frankly, the time to speak.

Really, I've said it here before—we're not making breakfast now; it's after lunch—we're not making lunch here; we're making law. Speaker, if you make a bad lunch, it affects you for one day. But if you make a bad law, it can affect you and impact the people here, the people throughout this province, for years, for decades. Shouldn't we take the time to actually make sure we get the process right? This process has been developed over hundreds of years, and it's been time-tested.

You know what? Time allocation is a mistake. It's a mistake that I think my party had something to do with.

Nevertheless, we'll admit our part of this mistake, but it remains a huge mistake. It would be better to let these bills pass, through normal process, and perhaps another three or four or five of my members would like to speak, and they would add some good points that would make this bill better. They would be allowed to speak on behalf of the people they were elected by.

Isn't that a novel concept? You get elected—we've all done it. You knock on doors; you talk to people; you get their views. You get elected; you get here. The government has every right to propose legislation. The legislation comes before you. It's something you've heard about at the doors; the people have called you about it. You're number 4 on the list to speak and—boom—you can't speak.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Because you're time-allocated.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. The other side, they laugh at this, but this is a very serious issue, especially from a government, from a Premier who always claims to be open and transparent.

I'm going to close my comments today, because my colleague from Oshawa would like to speak more directly to the bill.

Sometimes I quote things that my dad taught me. My dad taught me; he said that people who have to say they're honest—watch them, because you don't have to talk about being honest. Those are the ones you have to watch. Governments who claim to be open and transparent—you watch them. You shouldn't have to claim to be open and transparent if you are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I too look forward to the time to talk about this time allocation bill. A bill that limits debate, to me, is just fundamentally undemocratic. We're elected by the people in our respective ridings to come here, to debate, to bring their ideas, concerns, thoughts and suggestions to this House. Any government that would actually time-allocate, to me, is stripping them of that ability.

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That brings me back to Bill 8, the transparency and accountability act, Mr. Speaker. I have concerns there. In fact, I believe, if I'm not mistaken, that bill was time-allocated. How can you take transparency and accountability, make it into an act, and time-allocate it so that, again, everyone doesn't have their opportunity to bring their thoughts on behalf of their constituents into accord?

I'm going to just talk about the budget bill a little bit. This year's budget struck down the very heart of transparency and accountability. The Liberals stripped the Auditor General of her right to vet government advertising. They actually buried the change in their massive budget bill in an effort to blindside this House. How transparent is that? Millions of dollars are spent every year on government advertising. Because a lot of taxpayers' money is at stake, it only makes sense that a third party should review those ads and ensure they're not partisan. Premier Wynne and her deputy, Deb Matthews,

didn't like the idea of the Auditor General—currently Bonnie Lysyk—reviewing their ads, so they gutted the AG's oversight of the Government Advertising Act. Again, I ask, how is that transparent and how is that accountable?

Deputy Premier Deb Matthews told reporters in the past, "The government remains committed to its 2004 ban on the type of partisan ads that saw" a former government "appearing on screen—but wants more 'clarity' on the definition of partisan." The Deputy Premier has been around a long time. She knows exactly what "partisan" is.

I brought in a private member's bill last week in regard to third-party advertising. Again, the Liberals voted against that. I ask again: Transparency and accountability? You have to walk the talk. You can't say one thing and do the other.

Also buried in the budget bill was schedule 3. This allowed the government to remove the right of the members of the Legislature to have an unfiltered, uncensored report from our independent Auditor General. The first consequence of this change is to keep us in the dark on the sale of Hydro One. In fact, they will allow any future asset sale to proceed without any independent oversight. I ask again, Mr. Speaker, where is the transparency and accountability?

The Premier, in my mind and in the minds of many people—I hear it all the time, whether I'm back in my riding or I'm here in Toronto—I hear it oftentimes that the Premier of today has disgraced the Office of the Premier and the government.

We all believe and should strive for the ideal that government officials—those elected, most importantly—must uphold the integrity, transparency and lawfulness their positions require. Ontarians deserve nothing less.

Premier Wynne has staked her entire reputation on the promise she would clean up the stench. The abysmal image of things such as criminal investigations into the Premier's office—they are unprecedented in Ontario's history, and yet there are more of those. There are more scandals: gas plants, eHealth, Ornge. In all of those, we're talking about billions and billions of dollars that are now not there for the needy Ontarians who we're here most to serve, those less fortunate, those people who need a hand up in their time of need. The Premier campaigned exclusively on accountability and transparency. Clearly, she's not in it for the people of Ontario when you see that she's, again, still allowing bills to come in on time allocation.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that most Ontarians believe you cannot say one thing and do the other just because you happen to have power in office. They expect you to be standing up for the things that you believe in and the principles that they believe in. We are here to serve the people and those ideals of principle: accountability and transparency.

Instead, the Premier embroiled herself and her party in a bribery scandal in Sudbury that ends with one of their own being charged.

She also oversaw a \$2.5-million slush payment to teachers' unions. That's \$2.5 million taken away from special-needs students whose EAs have been eliminated in the Bluewater District School Board, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Just a few minutes ago, I received an email from a constituent, and I'm going to quote parts of that message:

"I just sent a message to our Premier, Ms. Wynne, expressing disgust at this move"—again, talking about this \$2.5-million secret payment made. "She claims this is normal and not a big number. This is anything but normal, and it is a big number. I should be so lucky in my personal finances to be able to say that."

"No wonder they can't seem to reach an agreement. It's almost like she is providing an incentive not to settle. Negotiation can and usually does involve pain, and that's what keeps the system in place. Ms. Wynne has just taken the pain away."

"I strongly object to what she just did as the latest example of fiscal ineptitude."

It also references the privatization of Hydro One. "I do hope there's an opportunity for the Conservative opposition, and yourself personally, to strongly challenge the government on this inept move."

Leadership is all about honesty, integrity and accountability. It's about personal principles. June 22, 2015: "Accountability Continues to Erode Under Wynne" Liberal government. What I want to talk about a little is what I started my conversation with: the fact that in December the Liberal government, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, passed Bill 8, the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act, which had intended to expand the Ombudsman's powers to include police services boards. However, the Liberal government exempted police services boards from such oversight by regulation behind closed doors.

"It seems curious that the Premier would choose to exempt police services boards from oversight at a time when Gerry Lougheed Jr., a Liberal fundraiser and the Chair of the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board, is being investigated by the OPP for allegedly offering a bribe to Andrew Olivier just before the Sudbury byelection." Those were comments that were brought to this House by my colleague from Leeds-Grenville, Steve Clark. "The Premier has missed an opportunity to prove that her words—for once—were not merely platitudes. Premier Wynne promised to be different, she promised to be open and transparent. This is just another way that Premier Wynne shows the people of Ontario that she's just not in it for them anymore." It saddens me to say it, but it really is a case of that. It's a case where we have to be paying more attention to the words we speak and then stand behind those words.

This morning in our clippings, I think, a great article—a lot of this morning's question period was talking about the payment that was made. I'm going to just take some excerpts from this; it's by the National Post. This is how the article starts: "Corruption is a strong word, which we don't often use in Canada when it

comes to politics. It infers a blatant disregard for honesty, ethics or principle. But it's the word that springs to mind when you contemplate the insidious relationship between Ontario's Liberal government and the teachers unions they do so much to cultivate and please." The recent "revelations of a \$2.5-million payment to three unions to cover their costs" of bargaining with the provincial government over a new contract—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind the member that we're talking about a time allocation motion, and ask him if he's going to bring his comments back to the time allocation motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am trying to stay in context. The concern I have with time allocation is that the important things that are happening under the watch of this government certainly need to be under the strictest scrutiny of openness and transparency. I'm just using the example, from recent happenings, of a secret payment being made that really discredits their openness and transparency, and it goes back to time allocation—trying to whistle things through, trying to just use their majority to steamroll things through that are going to have detrimental impacts for many years to come.

I'll continue: "The brazenness of it alone suggests the Liberals have lost any hint of rectitude when it comes to the handling of public money—though they did do their best to hide the transaction, suggesting that, at some level, they still sense it's offensive, wrong and abusive of the public trust." Yet they still did it.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Sandals and Premier Wynne have resolutely issued statements declaring there was no extra money for teachers and they had to live with it. Meanwhile, they were secretly agreeing to take money from a fund for needy students and use it for a pay raise, while writing another cheque so the union wouldn't have to pay its own bargaining costs.

It goes on to say, "Sandals' explanation is hardly credible." We need to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member again to bring his comments back to the matter that we're debating, which is the time allocation motion.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. Leadership is all about honesty, integrity and accountability. It's about personal principles. We're asking this government to think about their leadership style, to not time-allocate important bills in this House, to allow all of us to have an equal say to represent the people we've been given the privilege to represent.

Do the Liberals want to be defined by responsibility, integrity and accountability, or by recklessness, incompetence, scandal and what the general public would suggest are secret deals perceived to be a form of corruption?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to be able to stand in this Legislature and share my thoughts again, actually, on Bill 113, the Police Record Checks Reform

Act of 2015. As you heard from the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane, we have had the opportunity, as a caucus, to put forward three speakers to this bill, and I was one of them. So here I am again, and I'm going to make sure that some of my thoughts are able to get on record and remind the government why it's so important to have these conversations about such important issues.

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We live in a society that's built on the presumption of innocence, so that's why this bill is important: because when we see that there are examples that challenge the presumption of innocence, and we find those examples, we have to challenge that framework and re-establish or reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom to equitably participate in our communities.

This bill, as you may remember, was born out of public concern for the unfair disclosure of non-conviction records. We know that many people who are seeking to volunteer or are looking for employment, oftentimes in the non-profit sector—those individuals are routinely required to have police record checks done. Those checks are done through the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, database. Unfortunately, people who have sought housing or employment or these volunteer opportunities or opportunities of self-improvement have been denied them because of negative and unfair surprises on a police record check.

When a record check is done, as it stands now, the release of information disclosed through the record checks isn't limited to records of conviction. So, in fact, it may, and routinely does, include non-conviction records, which is why we're discussing this bill: to ensure that that is something that is addressed.

Again, just for clarification, "non-conviction" includes all contact with police where a record is taken, including criminal matters before the courts that result in acquittal; where a conviction is to be expunged; if someone is a witness to an event; or even when someone may be in mental health distress resulting in police contact. But the records taken for those incidents do not result in a conviction or even charges. Those are examples of non-conviction records, and those are examples of records that this bill is addressing and that shouldn't be able to come up in a volunteer search or a volunteer record check.

When these non-conviction records are disclosed during a routine background check, it can have very damaging consequences. We know that that's not right, and that that's not fair. Many of us remember that the Toronto Star ran a whole series of stories and anecdotes about individuals trying to participate in their community. The series was called "Presumed Guilty," focusing on individuals whose lives had been upset and unfairly affected by non-conviction records coming out on background checks.

According to the Star, back in 2014, they reported that:

"Hundreds of thousands of people are listed in Canada's national criminal records despite never having been convicted of a crime."

"More than 420,000 people were listed in the RCMP's Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) database as having no conviction in 2005...."

"Many of them are listed in the database for mental health issues."

When we have had the opportunity—limited opportunity—to debate this bill, we've heard from members around the room who have remembered issues from their past or perhaps police interactions that didn't result in charges or any convictions, but now they wonder, when they're travelling or trying to volunteer, if some of these missteps or interactions can come back to haunt them.

That's an interesting point. People have no idea what their police record might include. Records are very common, and they are disclosed without discretion. There are very real concerns about the information that is kept in these records serving as a deterrent to seeking police help or involvement. Imagine that if community members knew that by interacting—just interacting—with police, there could be a resulting record that could mean that they can't get a job, a volunteer position, or pursue a goal. I'm sure that those individuals would stop and think twice about interacting with police, and that isn't the kind of safe society that we want.

Imagine now a situation of crisis or distress, when an individual is in distress or is in danger. We would hope that they're going to reach out to the appropriate authorities or emergency services, if needed. We don't want the fear of repercussion influencing or impacting someone's decision to dial 911 or not—you know, a family member who is seeking help for someone who is struggling or is perhaps in mental distress. We don't want a family member to stop and think twice about involving the authorities because, uh-oh, well, maybe when they want to apply for a job down the road this will come back to haunt them. So, again, we're back to the crux of this issue and why it's so important to spend the time discussing this issue.

People who find themselves in medical distress, as I mentioned, or facing mental health challenges should not be captured under police record checks. Sometimes people need help or find themselves connecting with police when they're in distress, or while suffering a mental health or emotional crisis. Any record of this interaction should not be accessible by prospective employers, or anyone else, for that matter. In fact, non-conviction records, I would say, are none of anyone's business. There shouldn't be any disclosure of non-conviction records, with the only possible exception, as we've talked about earlier in debate, involving the most extreme cases connected to child welfare access or the vulnerable persons sector.

When we're talking about mental health—and we do oftentimes in this room and come at it from different angles—we know that we need a strategy, we know that we need to focus on this, we know that we need to support Ontarians. That's what we say: We need to support Ontarians, not vilify and persecute. We do not accept a system of persecution without prosecution. We also

want a system where Ontarians connect with the police as needed, and that they don't regret it for the rest of their lives or the rest of their professional careers. Until there's legislation that takes effect, that receives royal assent, then there is no framework, and records releases can vary widely from police jurisdiction to police jurisdiction.

Interestingly, this issue doesn't only affect those seeking employment or volunteer opportunities, and of course we've heard stories of individuals trying to travel internationally and having the American border services stop them and ask them about, maybe, missteps in their youth that are showing up as a non-conviction record in a police check, and then they can't travel with their family; they can't travel for business.

We're seeing that this has had an effect on a number of people, but also it affects students hoping to graduate from post-secondary education. They can find themselves unable to graduate because they are barred from completing a placement because of a non-conviction record. Schools might have privacy policies that prevent the school from investigating or delving into specifics, as we can understand, but if there's no room to manoeuvre then it's the end of story, the end of the line for that student, and those records preclude students from participating in some placement which means, then, that they can't complete the program. That isn't something that they would know until they've applied for this placement and—surprise—here is something on their record that is preventing them from advancing, from reaching those goals.

Our current system really does persecute individuals who were not charged, tried or convicted of anything. That isn't fair. It isn't right. That is why we're here—well, that's why we would like to be here, more fully discussing this bill and making sure that fair way forward is the right way, is the best way.

Oftentimes, especially when we're thinking about our communities and families—and I come out of education—we talk to our kids about online behaviour or the things that they do now, in their everyday lives, and being careful about how they post them, how they share them, that sort of thing, because that online behaviour and that online presence—I mean, we live in such an open world right now. We talk about openness and transparency, but for so many of our youth, it really is a wide community that is open and almost too transparent when it comes to their decisions and potential mistakes. We talk to them about their actions having long-term consequences, but it really does, in a new way.

But this bill is not dealing with things online or things that we decide to post about ourselves; it is about personal things that have happened. It might be interactions with police. It might be that you were a witness to a crime, or an event, and that you now have this record. For this to come back and haunt you isn't a choice you've made; it's just a surprise that is going to limit your opportunity.

Both the John Howard Society of Ontario and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association have written reports

on non-conviction records. According to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, one in three Canadians are thought to have some form of non-conviction record, just hanging out in police computers. So when we talk about those computers, it begs the question: How much data really is being held and why? How relevant is what happened to us as kids when we're pursuing adults goals?

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When we think of the nature of data and recordkeeping, these aren't pieces of paper that can end up in the bottom of a box or back on a shelf for time to forget. This is digital data that can be called forward in an instant. It doesn't really take up any physical space, as I said, opposed to the old days. Now, what is the incentive to get rid of it or to purge it? Those digital files aren't going to go away. Everything can come back to haunt us. This isn't about telling society to behave better; although, they should go ahead anyway, and we should all behave better, perhaps. But, really, it comes down to that we have a duty here to protect individuals and their right to participate in their community, their privacy and their right to pursue professional goals and dreams and whatnot.

As I said, this isn't just about things that we did that we hope we can hide; this is about things that we didn't even know about. This is about people just generally participating in their communities.

The police often have a reason to make a record, but as I asked, why do we need to keep those records forever if it doesn't lead to or connect to a charge or a conviction? Also, why should health records be filed as police records? I think that there is a fundamental question there that needs to be answered.

I believe in safe communities where people are able to participate freely, and I hope that all of us here do. Sometimes they make mistakes. Sometimes they are in the wrong place at the wrong time. Sometimes they're the wrong age or description. Sometimes they're just living life like anyone else. We want communities to communicate with police. We want communities to interact. We would hope that when they do, any record of it isn't going to ruin their careers or their hopes. We want people in need and in crisis to turn toward help and never to turn away from it.

As I've had the opportunity now twice to speak to this bill and to really reiterate that we have to challenge the framework and re-establish and reaffirm our commitment to justice, privacy and freedom so that everyone is able to participate fully and fairly in our communities and, of course, in their own futures, I'm going to shift gears. I have been inspired by some of the members on this side of the House who have spoken to this bill today and focused on the time allocation motion in front of us.

As my colleague from Timmins–James Bay had said, this is another opportunity to limit debate, as put forward here by the government. Instead of letting it pass through normal process, we're here cutting it off at the knees.

As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane had pointed out, three of our caucus members have spoken to

it. As we heard from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, four of the Progressive Conservative members have spoken to it. I don't have the numbers of how many members of the government have spoken to this bill, but I'm going to guess probably 40, or something like that. What happens in debate, Mr. Speaker, is when our members have 20 minutes to speak on a topic—as does the government—we put forward one speaker to really examine the issue, to delve into it, to bring various voices from our communities. We find, time and time again, on the government side, that in that same 20-minute opportunity, they might put up four or five speakers—not devaluing any of the points that they might make, but to count those, the numbers add up a little more quickly when you divvy up a 20-minute chunk into five or so. We didn't count those who speak during questions and comments in the little two-minute hits.

I think, in fairness, when we're talking about numbers, we really do need to not just focus on the minutes or the members, but the depth and breadth of the debate. I think that, as with this and as with many other bills, there is really important stuff we need to talk about and really, really meaningful issues that members of our communities and across the province would like to weigh in on. As my colleague from Timmins-James Bay said, it should be about the people of Ontario and the people's access to committees.

We've been debating important bills in here. I'm still a new member. I've been part of many interesting and many important debates. Almost all of them have been time-allocated, really, I think, in fairness. Recently, we've had Bill 115, which is focusing on electoral boundaries. It's interesting, because around the House we've all been talking at length about the importance of community engagement, and as we're looking at elections and we're looking at how to make it a better, stronger, fairer process, we've all talked about involving the community, engaging the members of the community. So here we stand with another time allocation motion that gives us exactly four hours: "That the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be authorized to meet on Thursday, November 5, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. in Toronto for the purpose of public hearings on the bill." I would note that it doesn't even say "or more, if needed." It's just the four hours and that's it. That's all you get.

I understand that the government wants to move things through and get on to the next and implement what they feel are good, solid ideas, and in this one we're not arguing that it's an important issue. But why wouldn't you say, "We're going to wait to hear back from the community and see how much time is needed"? No, no: four hours. That's it; that's all.

We also see here that the deadline for requests to appear be 12 noon on Tuesday, November 3. Okay. Well, that's in only a couple of days. So how are they going to invite Ontario? How are we going to let the people across the province know that they have four hours in Toronto to come and share their thoughts?

We've also talked about the committee time, that each witness will receive up to five minutes for their

presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members. I'll say that the time that I've spent in committee, whether on the ORPP and pensions or a budget hearing, that five minutes followed by nine minutes—remember, that's a breakdown with three minutes of questions from each of the parties. I have found this process to be fascinating, because when it comes to the government side, oftentimes the three minutes of questions can be three minutes of just diatribe to talk over them, to fill up the three minutes so that the person who is there presenting doesn't have the opportunity to continue talking. So it isn't nine minutes of back and forth. It can be; there's an opportunity there. But generally speaking, if it's someone who is coming to present and they have a contrary opinion to the government, I've watched it happen that they don't have even a second of the three minutes, because they don't want to hear it. So even though they have invited them to maybe travel from up north—if they can get there from up north, not taking a train that doesn't exist—for this four-hour block of time—

Mr. John Vanthof: It used to exist.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: So did travelling bills, or so I've heard. What a magical time I've missed. But the three minutes can just be three minutes of government rhetoric over top, and that isn't what we want. We want fair and open participation by members of the community at large. So I would encourage the government to rethink their time allocation strategy as their only strategy and actually involve the rest of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 42 relating to allocation of time on Bill 113. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral of this vote until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes, from the chief whip of the official opposition. This vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

1510

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Mr. Hoskins moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Ottawa South.

Our proposed Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, which I introduced in this Legislature on September 23, is our government's response to an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. That decision found that a provision in the Mental Health Act that allows a person to be involuntarily detained for more than six months was in breach of section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically, the right to life, liberty and security of the person.

As a result, the court struck down that provision, but suspended the declaration of invalidity for one year in order to allow our government to make amendments to the Mental Health Act in order to comply with the court's decision.

If passed, these amendments would make the Mental Health Act align with the charter, and at the same time would enhance the rights of involuntary patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities for longer than six months.

In order to provide some background: Involuntary patients are detained in psychiatric facilities because they have a mental illness and are at risk of harming themselves or others, or otherwise meet the criteria for involuntary committal under the Mental Health Act. Long-term involuntary patients are those who have been detained in those psychiatric facilities for more than six months. The majority of people who are detained in psychiatric facilities longer than six months generally have mood disorders, psychotic disorders or psycho-geriatric disorders. There are approximately 330 long-term involuntary patients in psychiatric facilities across this province.

According to the Mental Health Act, a physician may examine a person and determine whether or not they meet the criteria set out in the Mental Health Act for an application for psychiatric assessment, and that assessment is effective for seven days. This application by a physician is known as a form 1. The form 1 gives any person the authority to take the person who is subject to the form to a psychiatric facility.

At the facility, the attending physician, who can't be the same physician who issued the form 1, must then examine the person within 72 hours, and then either release them into the community or admit them to the psychiatric facility as either a voluntary or perhaps involuntary patient. The attending physician at the psychiatric facility is required to issue a further certificate of involuntary admission if the physician examines the person and determines that the person meets the criteria for involuntary admission, which, as I referenced, include whether they are at risk of serious bodily harm to themselves or others, or serious physical impairment as a result of a mental illness.

Under the Mental Health Act, a person can be detained involuntarily for an initial two-week period, for an

additional month on first renewal of the involuntary admission, for an additional two months on a second renewal of involuntary admission and for three additional months on a third certificate of renewal.

However, under our proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act, where a person's third certificate of renewal expires, they would be placed on a certificate of continuation, which would be valid for an additional three months. A patient may be put on subsequent certificates of continuation, each lasting for up to three months. This timing is similar to that currently provided for under the Mental Health Act in relation to fourth and subsequent certificates of renewal.

Under the current Mental Health Act, a patient is entitled to a review of his or her involuntary status after the certificate of admission—the first one—and after each certificate of renewal is issued. After an involuntary patient has been in hospital for more than six and a half months, and every year thereafter, there's a mandatory review of the patient's involuntary status before the Consent and Capacity Board.

The Consent and Capacity Board is a quasi-judicial provincial tribunal that considers applications for the review of matters, including findings of involuntary status under the Mental Health Act, and other matters, including reviews of findings of incapacity to consent to treatment by health practitioners. But the Consent and Capacity Board's jurisdiction is currently limited to a consideration of whether the prerequisites for admission or continuation as an involuntary patient are satisfied at the time of the hearing. If the prerequisites are met, the Consent and Capacity Board may confirm the patient's status as an involuntary patient, but if they are not met, the Consent and Capacity Board must rescind the certificate of involuntary admission or renewal.

The amendments we're proposing would provide additional rights to long-term involuntary patients in the form of enhanced powers for the Consent and Capacity Board when considering the continued detention of patients who have been involuntary patients for more than approximately six months. The amendments would also allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. This would free up existing psychiatrist capacity for the more complex hearings anticipated by the amendments.

As the Court of Appeal required us to do, the amendments would maximize the liberty of long-term involuntary patients while still ensuring that appropriate conditions exist for a patient committed for a long stay in a psychiatric facility, if needed.

Our government is working with our valued system partners to improve mental health and addictions services in Ontario. This past November, we announced the next phase of our 10-year comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy. We know that mental health challenges during childhood and adolescence can lead to serious problems at school, family conflicts, drug abuse, violence and sometimes even suicide. That's why we

made a conscious decision to address child and youth mental health first, because a healthy start in life will lead to better mental health in adulthood and reduce the likelihood of substance abuse.

For the first three years of our strategy, that strategy was focused on mental health supports for children and youth. Almost 800 additional mental health workers are now providing services for children and youth in our communities, in our schools and in our courts. In addition, our Tele-Mental Health Service is providing nearly 3,000 psychiatric consults this year alone to benefit children and youth in rural, remote and underserviced communities.

Last November, our government announced the next phase of our 10-year comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, which will broaden and deepen our efforts and build on that first phase of our strategy, because the fact is, we need to do better for individuals in need of mental health and addictions services and supports, not only acute care but, importantly, longer-term care and supports that revolve around the patient.

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So our strategy will identify gaps, it will improve transitions between youth and adult services, and invest in improved services and care for Ontarians of all ages who experience mental health or addictions issues.

That's why we're making targeted investments like the \$138 million over the next three years to shift more mental health services into the community. We're making investments to ensure that those services are more timely, that they're more effective, that they're responsive and that they provide ongoing care and support that treats patients as people with dignity, breaking down the barriers that those struggling with mental illness and addictions too often face.

This investment will support better access to mental health and addictions services, including increased access to services such as supportive housing, short-term crisis support beds, peer support groups and treatment programs. It will provide support for shorter wait times for care through the new registry of in-patient mental health beds. It will provide doctors, first responders and emergency departments with up-to-date information about available in-patient beds across the province.

This investment will help to improve transitions between care teams so people don't have to tell their story multiple times.

Finally, it will provide for more, and early, intervention initiatives to reduce repeat visits to emergency departments.

We're already made significant progress on mental health services through working together, but we realize that there is a tremendous amount of work yet to be done. Moving forward, we have an opportunity to transform how mental health and addictions services are delivered, where people receive those services and how we pay for mental health and addictions services.

We've also established a Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council to advise me on the

strategies, priorities and investments to promote collaboration across sectors and report annually on the strategy's progress. I look forward to continuing to work with them and with all of you to implement the next phase of this strategy.

Addressing mental health and addictions is a shared responsibility. The provincial government can't do it alone. I know all of you here realize that. It takes collaboration and it takes co-operation. All parts of the system—our providers, administrators, government, community leaders and organizations—must come together to ensure the best outcomes for people with mental health problems or addictions.

Finally, we have a short time frame to address the Court of Appeal decision. These amendments are required by December 22 of this year in order to support the continued detention of patients under the Mental Health Act who have been involuntary patients in psychiatric hospitals for more than six months. Releasing such long-term psychiatric patients into the community would, of course, potentially risk the safety and well-being of the patients as well as, potentially, of the community at large.

So in the interests of patients and the community at large, I urge all members to support our proposed amendments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The minister indicated that he's sharing his time with the member for Ottawa South. I recognize the member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to follow the minister today, to the lead-off on second reading debate on our proposed amendments to the Mental Health Act, which, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility longer than six months have their liberty interest protected, while at the same time ensuring that health care providers can continue to provide excellent care to these patients. The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, introduced these proposed amendments on September 23 of this year.

We are taking action to comply with the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal, which declared that part of the Mental Health Act is in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave us until December 23 of this year to make amendments to the Mental Health Act that comply with the court's decision.

Specifically, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. This was because the Mental Health Act did not provide for a regular review of the conditions of the patient's continued detention to ensure that it would be the least restrictive within the circumstances that required that detention.

Bill 122 is intended to address the court's concerns. The amendments would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain orders in relation to patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as an involuntary patient for longer than six months. A

factor that the board would have to take into account would be that any limitation on a patient's liberty be the least restrictive, commensurate with the circumstances requiring the patient's involuntary detention. The board would make a decision based on the evidence before it.

The amendments would make it possible to detain a patient on a new form, a certificate of continuation, after the expiry of the patient's third certificate of renewal—that is, after six months and two weeks. A certificate of continuation will allow a patient who has been detained in a psychiatric hospital longer than six months to be detained for an additional three-month period, similar to the current certificates under the Mental Health Act. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods if the patient continues to meet the test for being involuntarily detained under the act.

To ensure that long-term involuntary patients are not detained in a manner greater than is necessary to meet the important objectives of the Mental Health Act—that is, ensuring community safety and helping patients get what they need, get the treatment that they need—the Consent and Capacity Board would also be given the power to make a limited range of additional orders, in specific circumstances, when it reviews a long-term involuntary patient's certificate of continuation. These would be:

- transferring a patient to another psychiatric facility if the patient does not object;

- placing a patient on a leave of absence on the advice of a physician;

- directing the officer in charge to provide different security levels or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility;

- directing the officer in charge to provide supervised or unsupervised access to the community; and

- directing the officer in charge to provide vocational, interpretation or rehabilitative services.

Giving the Consent and Capacity Board the power to make one or more of this specified list of orders will give it the tailored tools to support the needs of long-term involuntary patients, while continuing to provide accessible and timely reviews for those patients.

Similar to the current regime in the Mental Health Act, the long-term involuntary patient would be entitled to a request a review of his or her involuntary status after each certificate of continuation is issued, and there would be a mandatory review of the patient's involuntary status when the first certificate of continuation is issued at six months and two weeks, and every year thereafter. The long-term involuntary patient would also be able to apply for an additional order any time they seek a review of the renewal of their certification where they have not applied in the past 12 months or where the Consent and Capacity Board is satisfied that there has been a material change in circumstances.

The Consent and Capacity Board would be able to make one or more of these new orders on its own motion. The Consent and Capacity Board would also be able to hear an application to transfer the long-term involuntary

patient, made by the officer in charge or the Minister or Deputy Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, at any time.

The amendments would also allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. This would free up existing psychiatrist capacity for the more complex hearings anticipated by the amendments. Right now, there are a little over 300 individuals who are involuntarily detained in hospital for longer than six months, and they would be helped by the amendments we are introducing today.

Let me assure the members that the ministry continues to work closely with its health system partners to accommodate the new hearings starting December 23, 2015, as required by the court's decision.

Speaker, so many Ontarians have been touched by mental health and addictions in some way, and we're committed to supporting the most appropriate care for people experiencing mental health and addictions challenges. I urge all members to support our proposed amendments.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is a pleasure to speak to this bill. These amendments are much needed. The care of our mentally ill people in this province is a very high priority and has been neglected for a long time. I hear stories from an ex-police chief in my community of Ottawa that up to 60% of the time policemen spend on the streets is occupied with looking after people who have mental health problems. The fact is that people with mental health problems end up on the street and get into all kinds of trouble with crime, drugs, alcohol etc., and that degenerates into just a vicious circle to the bottom of the world.

It is good to see these changes made. We need to go even further, I know and am sure, but it is impressive and positive that we're doing this much. We need to put more health care people on the street to look after the people on our streets who have these mental health troubles, and the only persons out there to look after them are policemen. It's an expensive way, and it's not their job. We need to have more trained, professional health care people on the street to help our people, especially young people, who end up in that vicious cycle of prostitution, alcohol and drugs as a result, in many cases, of mental health problems.

We support this bill, Mr. Speaker. We look forward to doing even more in this country. Mentally ill people are a needy group, and we have others that we do not do enough for. As a caring society, I would say we have a moral obligation to help these people. I look forward to doing more positive things like we're speaking of today, and I applaud the government for doing what is right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was interesting to listen to the Minister of Health and the parliamentary assistant to the

Minister of Health regarding Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996. Speaker, I cannot tell you how many people want to amend the Mental Health Act. Things have changed dramatically in Ontario since this thing was written 20-some years ago. Finally we have a bill that will open the Mental Health Act. There is a pent-up demand from people wanting the Mental Health Act to be opened, and finally it is open.

But do you know what, Speaker? This is unbelievable: Since December of last year, we knew that we had to do something. We knew that we had to bring changes to this act, because the court ordered us to do so. But today is October 26, and I have not even done my lead. We have barely started to talk about a piece of legislation that—anybody who knows anything about health care knows there are a thousand people who want amendments to the Mental Health Act. We are opening up this act at the eleventh hour, really, because between now and the time the House rises, we're talking about a maximum of five weeks. This thing is going to have to go through, I'm hoping, second reading, committee, third reading and royal assent, and all this needs to be done before December 22, because on December 23, the door swings open and 330 severely mentally ill people get out.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to be able to speak, as well, to Bill 122, the mental health act. The minister talked at length about the evolving care of treatments in our institutional, down to community health care, levels, and how important that is. Nowhere is it more important than in mental health facilities, where people who are on the street, who are suffering from mental health and addictions, can find neighbourhood and community supports to assist them on the road to recovery. I guess what the act is trying to do, if it's passed, we heard from the parliamentary assistant, is amend the act so it is completely in accord with the constitutional aspects.

In my own community, where we have the East End Community Health Centre, for instance—last week I was there to help them celebrate their 25th anniversary providing street care—they provide an incredibly holistic approach in all aspects of health, whether for seniors and youth, addictions and eating disorders, and mental health issues, where people find a safe haven. They come into the facility, they may just come in for a cup of coffee, but they're then able to transition, to move on and to receive the kind of specialized care they need, not just from psychiatrists, but even from dietitians—employment supports—and from nurse practitioners who can use their specialty expertise. The East End Community Health Centre was one of the first centres in Ontario that was using nurse practitioners to their fullest capacity and providing tremendous support to people.

We also know that for people suffering from mental health issues, finding housing is a critical component to their ongoing recovery and their success. An organization like the East End Community Health Centre can help them find stable housing in the community.

These kinds of issues are not completely centred around downtown, urban environments. We know people in rural communities and certain parts have issues as well. In my community, I can tell you that the kinds of changes being proposed here are extremely important to help mental health advocates do their work to help the community be healthier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 122. I'll be interested in hearing from my colleagues, the members from Elgin-Middlesex-London and Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, shortly on their views on the bill, as our critics.

The way we deal with people suffering from mental illness is probably one of the saddest chapters of our time and one of the things that I think we have failed most miserably on. I'm looking forward to the effect that this legislation will have because it has been so long either ignored or wrongfully dealt with. Our streets are full of people who end up in jail simply because their mental illness gets them there. They may take actions that are unacceptable in a lawful society, but it is the fact that they are suffering from severe mental illness that is the biggest factor in that action.

We have such a long way to go. We're never going to solve every problem, but anything that we can be doing to actually deal with people who are suffering from mental illness in a compassionate and caring way that addresses the illness and not always simply the consequences of it—and that's only one part of it. That's only one part of it, but one that pains me every day when I see people who are clearly struggling, and we have failed as a society to somehow protect them, even from themselves. There's so much work to be done, and this could be at least a positive step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments.

I return to the member for Ottawa South for his reply.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, the member from Nickel Belt, the member from Beaches-East York and the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their comments.

In response to the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, I do want to say that I do understand what you're saying. Having had some personal experience with people close to me suffering from mental illness and addiction, when you see somebody on the street it's a really tough thing. We have to continue to work to do what we can, to get better at that, to reach those people and to make sure they don't get on the street. Once again, I very much appreciate his support for the bill.

In response to the member from Nickel Belt, I appreciate her desire to open up the bill. You are correct; we're on a fairly tight timeline here. It's a very specific piece of legislation that addresses a court decision. In fairness, I think that, in some of the time that it takes to address that court decision, you've got to get it right.

Because of the nature of the risks that are involved, for the patients and their liberty and their rights and, as well, the issue around public safety, you have to make sure that you get it right and satisfy that court decision.

1540

I don't think the concern she expressed in terms of the deadline is an indication of not being supportive of the bill. It's more of an indication of your desire to have something more expansive, which I don't think would have been prudent or right to do at the time. I do appreciate that we have a tight timeline.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everyone for their comments. I look forward to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I will be sharing my time with the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, who has been a remarkable MPP while he has been at Queen's Park for the last four-plus years. I'm very grateful to be working with him and—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Outstanding in his field.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Outstanding in his field. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today and speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. It's important that we have this opportunity to discuss mental health because it's something that does affect Canadians throughout our country. In fact, one in five Canadians will personally experience a type of mental illness in their own lifetime.

Mental illness, you could argue, is probably the leading cause of disability throughout our country, so it's important we get the opportunity to discuss mental illness quite frequently while we're here in the Legislature.

I am in agreement with my fellow critic from the NDP, the member from Nickel Belt, in saying that there are so many things we could do to improve mental health in this province. Opening up the Mental Health Act does not happen too often, and we did have the opportunity—and I've counted it; we have five weeks left to finish second reading, go through committee, have third reading and royal assent. It's not on the schedule to speak to this bill for the rest of this week, so this week's off. We have the week off when we're in our constituencies for Remembrance Day, and we rise for Christmas on December 10. So all of this has to be put in place in this short time period. I understand the government would have had time to create this bill; I get that. However, first reading of this bill was September 23. We've gone a month without debating this bill, which could have added an extra month to this time frame. I think that's the point the member from Nickel Belt was trying to point to. There are so many issues with mental health. You've taken a long time to fix this bill due to the court challenge. However, you're not maximizing the time we have left to have a true and honest, open, lengthy debate on some of the changes that are going forward.

For the record, our party does support this legislation. We hope we can get it passed by December 10. We have

amendments that we will be putting forward during committee. I hope, due to the seriousness of this issue, the government just doesn't use their majority and ignore the opposition MPPs' suggestions at committee—and in fact give it true thought and discussion and possibly supporting amendments as we go forward.

Before I get into the crux of my discussion, I want to make a few introductory remarks with regard to mental health. We must all admit that treatment has vastly improved over the years. Speaking as a pharmacist, treatment alone with medication I've seen in the community practice has greatly improved. We've gone from anti-psychiatric medicine, which would affect your white blood cell counts and could only be dispensed in certain small time periods and is still used throughout Ontario—it's a great medication. However, because of the blood tests needed to order it to ensure your white blood cells aren't affected, we've gone to newer medications which are very effective and can be taken once a day. They're so effective that they can even be taken under the tongue and dissolved. You don't have to swallow. You don't have to worry about patients in the community hiding their pills and spitting them out when you leave. These dissolve in your mouth and ensure compliance. So treatment has come a long, long way. We're not there yet, but I do commend how, as a Legislature, we've been supportive of helping reintegrate people with mental illness back into the community instead of how they did it decades ago: Put them in a building and keep them away from the community. It's great that we are now focusing on recovery and healing and giving mental health patients hope. I applaud the government for continuing to push that way and I applaud the opposition parties for supporting that issue.

What we need to deal with is the stigma of mental illness in our communities. Quite a bit of the stigma of mental illness is treating mental illness like a physical illness. It's nothing different from, say, if you have a heart problem, trouble breathing or a kidney problem. We need to treat the symptoms and, if possible, get you on a road to recovery.

My area, Elgin—Middlesex—London, has done tremendous events trying to deal with the stigma of mental health, and I'll continue to be supportive of that group in our community as we push forward. Of note, we did have Clara Hughes in our riding when she was biking across Canada with her big "fighting the stigma of mental illness." I thought it was great for her to do that. It was sponsored by Bell. Bell has Let's Talk every year, which I hope people are supportive of. It gets out the idea that mental illness does not have to be stigmatized. My own riding, as I mentioned earlier, has that program, but we seem to have always been involved with mental illness.

In 1939, a farm was donated to the government by a former Liberal Premier, Mitch Hepburn. Mitch lived just outside and south of St. Thomas, in central Elgin, between St. Thomas and Union, and his family still operates the farm across the road. They grow tremendously great apples. It's funny, just as an aside: The Con-

servative member who beat Mitch Hepburn was also an apple farmer. It was kind of interesting.

Mitch was a Premier of Ontario during the 1930s, and his family donated the land. In 1939, the St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospital was built. It was built for 2,400 patients and it was built on 464 acres of land. Part of the recovery for patients, at that time, was to do farming. They have some historic buildings where the first hands-on growing of food and milking of cows and such by the patients at the facility happened. It was state of the art at the time.

In the 1940s that area was actually taken over by the military and used as a Royal Canadian Air Force training facility. They trained over 60,000 people through World War II at that facility. Then, back in 1947, it was returned to the Ontario hospital system and 1,100 patients were situated at the St. Thomas psychiatric facility.

In 2001, St. Joseph's Health Care out of London assumed governance. At that time, the facility was Regional Mental Health Care St. Thomas. That's when we started moving more into community programs with the ACT teams, the team of nurses who help take care of and transition people out of hospital into community settings. The initial group was called the PACT team, but really they're ACT teams. I worked quite often with these groups. They're highly trained nurses who are out there ensuring that the medications are given to the patients at the right time. They ensure they're being taken care of in the community, and watch for any symptoms that they need to see their doctor for and such. I commend those people in the ACT teams who work hard every day in our communities. They've come a long way.

Just recently, in 2013, they closed down our regional mental health care centre, and now the government has built the Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care for 80 to 90 patients. That's an area that has taken in the patients who have had trouble with the law and who aren't guilty due to their mental illness. This hospital facility not only houses them; it helps treat them on a road to recovery.

The other part that happened is that the government created 17 beds in our St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital for our mental health patients in the community. If they need a bed to stay in short-term treatment, they have the bed there, and out of those 17 beds are the treatment teams the ACT teams will work out of in order to have community programs. It's part of pushing and creating teams out in the community that take care of our mental health patients.

1550

I just wanted to give you that quick history of where I come from in Ontario and how mental health has always been integrated into our society from before and for years to come. Not only are there quite a few mental health patients within my area; it has also created quite a few employment opportunities, with health care professionals, social workers, PSWs etc. taking care of those with mental health issues. So it does affect our local economy, but it also serves to ensure that people are adequately taken care of.

I mentioned earlier the stigma about mental health and how it affects the lives of Ontarians. As I said, it needs to be treated as just as important as physical health. Unfortunately, just last week, Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addiction have not improved in five years. So while the government is working to improve conditions, we can't just say we have the best system. We need to do more. We need to work harder.

The health critic from the NDP mentioned that we could have done a lot more with the Mental Health Act being opened. Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted the fact that that is a reason why we needed to have more in-depth discussion with regard to the Mental Health Act and how we can improve mental health.

Some 4,000 Canadians die every year due to suicide, and the majority of those are due to mental illness.

Mental illness is also severely costly on business, costing them \$6 billion in lost productivity throughout Canada due to absenteeism. Those who believe they are fighting mental illness are more likely to see their family physician than any other health care provider, and community mental health services are less expensive—sometimes up to five times less expensive—than hospital-based care. So these ACT teams—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Presenteeism, too.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Pardon me?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Presenteeism.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Presenteeism. Thanks for being present today, too.

Community mental health services are less expensive, so—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It means being physically present but not really there.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, I'm glad you are here.

They are five times less expensive than hospital-based care. I'm glad the member opposite is listening, because we're having a conversation. I know the Speaker probably doesn't like that. But that hits home how mental health services are less expensive in the community than in the hospital.

It can be even cheaper. The coordination of some services in the community through the CCAC, where we account for 40% of the money not reaching front-line care, but going into the bureaucracy—I think that's another thing this government can work on: cheaper, more supportive care, with the roundabout of health care professionals supporting the people with mental health conditions. The more money getting to the front-line services, the better services we'll have.

Mental health problems do not necessarily remain between the patient and a health care provider within the hospital or doctor's office setting, and can very quickly become unsafe if part of this pattern is broken. In 2012, one in five contacts with first responders involved someone with a mental illness, and in 2013, according to the London police, more than \$14 million, or 15% of the

budget, was used to deal with calls for people with mental illness.

Not only is it harmful to people with mental health conditions when they aren't able to be treated; the cost on our other emergency services is taxed when people with mental health conditions aren't helped. If the province properly funded and coordinated mental health, then our first responders would not be wasting their dollars and resources waiting at hospitals, but would be out there doing the jobs they should be doing. This could cause a severe financial burden to our cities, and ultimately creates an unsafe environment where professionals like our police officers, ambulance, paramedics and fire-fighters spend more time transferring or dealing with mentally ill patients than watching over our communities.

This bill, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, comes into compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. These amendments are in response to the Ontario Court of Appeal decision in 2014. This found that the Mental Health Act violates section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as it provides insufficient procedural protections for involuntary patients who are detained in psychiatric facilities for more than six months. The entire law is being amended because of this one case.

It's worthy to note that the court gave the government one year to make these changes we mentioned earlier. If these changes aren't put in place before we recess for our winter break, 339 patients will be released into the communities. It's tough to deal with, when this bill was first read on September 23, and October 26 is the first date we're actually opening debate on this legislation. We only have five more weeks left before this bill must be put into effect to come into compliance with the Court of Appeal.

As it stands now, the Mental Health Act allows for repeated renewals of a patient's involuntary status—one month under a first certificate of renewal, two months under a second certificate of renewal, and three months for a third or subsequent certificate of renewal. Currently, form 4—the certificate of renewal—is used when the doctor determines that the patient must remain in a hospital involuntarily for an extended period of time. There is no mechanism for civilly detained patients to challenge the conditions of their treatment.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ordered that the words "or subsequent" be struck out. The bill now creates a certificate of continuation in its place. This is a new form capable of detaining a patient after the expiry of the third certificate of renewal. The certificate of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for a three-month period, similar to the third certificate of renewal. Subsequent certificates of continuation would allow a patient to be detained for further three-month periods.

When a patient is issued their first certificate of continuation, they are entitled to apply for a hearing with the Consent and Capacity Board to confirm whether the prerequisites for involuntary status are met. This happens at approximately six and a half months. The bill would

allow the board to hear an application made by the patient or on the applicant's behalf before 12 months have passed. If a patient doesn't apply to have their detention reviewed, it will be automatically reviewed by the Consent and Capacity Board every 12 months.

This bill will add a regulation-making power that will give rights advice to patients with respect to their ability to request orders regarding their detention. Prior to the amendments in this bill, patients would be detained involuntarily. They would stay either at the facility for any number of days or they would be released. No changes to the term of their detention were allowed.

The proposed amendments would give the board increased powers to make one or more of the following orders in response to a patient application at their certificate of continuation hearing: They can transfer the patient to another facility if the patient does not object; place the patient on a leave of absence for a designated period, upon the advice of the doctor; direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with a different security level or privileges inside and outside of the facility; direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to allow the patient to be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community; or direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with vocational, interpretation or rehabilitative services.

The board will be required to make the above decisions while keeping in mind public safety, the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patient and others, the mental condition of the patient, the reintegration of the patient into society and the other needs of the patient. Limitations to the patients' liberty must be the least restrictive with the circumstances requiring patients' involuntary detentions.

A doctor may issue a community treatment order to reintegrate the patient back into society. The board would be required to consider that notice when reviewing the patient's involuntary status. A community treatment order is issued by the doctor solely on—it is their discretion alone to issue an order if they so choose; a community treatment order may not be suggested by anyone else. Community treatment orders are often facilitated by the local Canadian Mental Health Association. Community treatment orders are helpful to get patients integrated back into their communities, and if successful, are less of an economic burden on our health care system.

As I said, we have a couple of amendments. We've heard from a number of psychiatrists already in my office regarding this bill. I would bring their issues forward and maybe we can have a good debate about it, either through the rest of second reading or perhaps even at committee level, when maybe they can get the opportunity to come and speak themselves.

They have concerns regarding the Consent and Capacity Board panel. They're concerned that allowing a substitution of a psychiatrist with any doctor or nurse practitioner for form-16 applications degrades the board's authority as an expert tribunal relating to mental

health. They feel it will have a deleterious effect on patients coming before the board and the evolution of the laws governing mental health.

1600

The Consent and Capacity Board was created to function as an expert mental health tribunal to adjudicate matters of great importance to patients, doctors and society. From the beginning, the board has always maintained the importance of three equal perspectives as a way to ensure the most appropriate outcomes. All members of the board—the lawyer, psychiatrist and community member—have specific expertise that the board requires and should value equally.

The deference afforded to the board by the courts is derived from a function of its expert panel members. By removing the psychiatrist expertise from the panel, both the hearing itself and the deliberation process will be negatively affected. The panel will be less equipped to elicit relevant psychiatric evidence as part of its duty. As a result, the board will be more likely to miss the subtleties of the specific psychiatric presentations, which are often highly relevant to the ultimate decision made by the panel members. Replacing this perspective with a less expert one risks bad decisions being made. These bad decisions may well be subject to the more successful court appeals, which will expose the board to greater scrutiny and perhaps erode its current standing as an expert tribunal.

The deliberation process will also be at risk, as non-psychiatric physicians and nurse practitioners may feel less able or comfortable stimulating relevant discussion on issues that may shape both the decision itself and future legal precedent.

The treatment of mental health patients is quite complex. You learn quite a bit in your dealings with them day to day. Basically, this psychiatrist is saying that you wouldn't replace the lawyer in a consent board with a—what do you call it?

Interjection: Paralegal.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Paralegal; thank you. You wouldn't replace one with a paralegal. He's basically saying, "Don't take the expert away from the board." I know the minister has said it frees them up for other activities; I think the problem may be that maybe they're not attracting the doctors, the psychiatrists, to the board. Maybe we should figure out the root causes of why those psychiatrists aren't available at the board level and keep the expert level at the highest possible level at all times during this process.

The other discussion that we should be able to discuss right now is from another psychiatrist who brought this forward. The proposed amendments with Bill 122 neither reduce the number of individuals requiring lengthy hospitalizations nor ensure the right to receive timely treatment needed to improve their condition and obtain their freedom. Presently, when a patient appeals a Consent and Capacity Board finding of treatment incapacity to court, with rare exception, treatment may not begin.

He goes on to talk about the higher cost of withholding treatment from patients. He even mentions the

World Health Organization: the "aim of mental health legislation is to protect, promote and improve the lives and mental well-being of citizens." Unaltered, current Ontario law and Bill 122 do the opposite. For most individuals suffering from severe mental illness, treatment with medication is required to establish a level of stability necessary to allow for engagement in important psychological treatments and social supports that further facilitate recovery.

Even this government itself in 2010—the all-party Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, led by Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn, who wasn't the Minister of Labour at that time, and Dr. Helena Jaczek, who is now the Minister of Community and Social Services; Liz Sandals, the Minister of Education, and Jeff Leal, her agricultural minister, were all on this committee. They presented their final report. The committee acknowledged the excessive and unnecessary suffering permitted under the current legislation and expressed certainty that these harms could be avoided through legislative or policy changes that ensure that involuntary admission must also entail treatment.

We are having this discussion on this bill, which I think the government had ample time since 2010, since their own members—part of this all-party select committee—brought forward these recommendations, to be prepared to, when they do open the Mental Health Act, perhaps add these items in. Maybe, hopefully, during our deliberations at committee, we'll have a good discussion and perhaps, as amendments, we could fix part of this bill and fix part of this problem.

The minister also made mention of the mental health and addiction strategy. They had their 10 goals: improve the mental health and well-being of all Ontarians; create healthy, resilient, inclusive communities; identify mental health and addictions problems early and intervene; provide timely, high-quality, integrated, person-directed health and other human services.

The government has focused on youth for the last three and a half years, and that's fine. We're supportive of improving the health, but they could do more.

In my riding alone, look at the housing availability for those with mental illness. The wait-list to get into a group home in our riding is decades long, 10 to 20 years. The only way to get into a group home is, unfortunately, for someone to pass away. Otherwise, people slip away. They end up in some sort of housing that doesn't have the supports in place, and fall through the gaps. We've seen problems in London and area with regard to some of their group homes, with the effect that they're not livable conditions.

With this health strategy in place, I think this government can work to improve the life of more than just the youth with regard to mental illness. It's not something that goes away in a short period of time. You technically need to deal with this throughout the years.

Before I close and let Mr. Walker speak, I just wanted to touch upon something I went to on Friday night, which I thought was really neat. It's called the Healing Palette.

It's the 10th anniversary. Each year, near the end of October, a group of mental health patients who meet weekly for support—they're using art to help their healing and recovery—put on an art display. I've got to commend Anne, who organizes the event. The art on display is quite tremendous—the talent they have. During the evening, they also recite the poetry or the prose they have written, and it's usually quite engaging when they talk about how mental health issues have affected them. This year, we were given the opportunity to listen to some of the music that they've created, which was quite entertaining.

I was talking to one of the supporters of the group. He's a gentleman who, three years ago, was homeless in Toronto. He has mental health issues. He is now a regular contributor and presenter. He transitioned from Toronto back to St. Thomas, where he was born and raised, got the treatment he needed and the support in the community, and he started writing. He is a gifted writer. He wouldn't present the first few years because he wasn't ready yet. Over the last two years, he has been an avid presenter of his writings.

It just shows that with proper programs and support in place, people with mental illness have a place in our society and can be whole in our community. I'm glad our community is there to embrace people with mental health conditions—and we'll continue to do so.

We need to ensure that we have support for the front-line workers who help support people with mental health. We need to have a broader discussion than this bill on mental health, and hopefully, the government can bring forward other legislation that we can have open debate upon. There's a lot to talk about.

We've had the mental health strategy put forth. I mentioned two items that might be voted down by this government in committee that would strengthen this. The member from Nickel Belt definitely has issues that she would like to discuss on mental health. There is a plethora of supporters and stakeholders throughout Ontario who would like to see changes to the Mental Health Act. I believe she said 15 years was the last time this bill was changed dramatically in any way. Treatment has changed so much, and the ideology of how to support people with mental health issues has changed, so I think it's time we had a broader discussion.

I will turn the floor over to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London indicated he's sharing his time with the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's an honour to rise this afternoon and share my time with my friend, colleague and the MPP for Elgin–Middlesex–London, Jeff Yurek. Jeff is a very knowledgeable member. It has been a pleasure to serve with him for my four years. He's very involved in a hands-on capacity, as a pharmacist. When he talks about health care, he's someone who has spent his life—they have a company with his brother. I believe they've taken

that over from their father. I'm not certain if Grandpa was part of that as well.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: He was a railroad man. There you go. St. Thomas is famous for that as well.

1610

It's a fabulous thing to see Jeff and to be able to see what he brings to caucus with his knowledge. It's a pleasure to be an associate critic with Jeff. Part of that is because we both want to ensure that the health care system provides the absolute best care, at the front lines, to the patients that we can. We want to minimize, whenever possible, the bureaucracy and the administration so that everything is going to the front line. He referenced it a number of times in his remarks about front-line workers and the need to ensure that they have the resources in our communities when people need them.

Mental illness is something that, again, strikes—we can't predict it; no one knows when it will happen. But what I can tell you, from the families that I've talked with in my riding, they need those services when that happens, and they want to know and have a comfort level that when they are there, they will be there. I'm very appreciative of the comments that he has made and pleased to contribute to an issue that I know all of us are passionate about.

Mental health is slowly coming out of the shadows. Of course, it wasn't always the case. For centuries, people suffering with mental illnesses were stigmatized, judged and even blamed, rather than helped. Today, its prevalence in society is undeniable. One in five Canadians has bouts with a mental illness. This means that each one of us here knows someone close to us who experienced that angst and got swept up in that whirlwind of self-doubt. This number reflects how widespread our vulnerability is and how widespread mental health challenges run in our society.

I recently read that mental health manifests itself more in Western society than in other cultures. From anxiety to depression, it creeps up on us more often for reasons not yet understood. It may be that we test and push ourselves in the workplace and at home, and perhaps is a result of us striving to keep up with the individual expectations we set for ourselves. Perhaps this type of self-induced pressure is putting us at risk of anxiety disorders.

No doubt this is the single issue we hear about very frequently in our work as the people's representatives. I know of some of the struggles that constituents in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound endure as they try to find care for themselves or their family members and loved ones. In fact, I am made aware on occasion of the crisis that families are facing in finding mental health and addictions treatment for their loved ones, particularly children. The reality is that there are simply not enough services to help people battling mental illness.

Just a few months ago, my office received a call from parents who were trying valiantly to locate a psychiatric bed for their teenaged son after he had attempted suicide. The young man spent three days in a local hospital, but

his condition was deteriorating, and the parents were anxiously searching for a bed so he could start receiving the care he needed. We knew it wasn't going to be easy to find him a bed because all 252 beds in London were occupied, as well as the other 190 in this part of southwestern Ontario. To clarify, there are 443 adult and adolescent acute in-patient mental health beds in the South West LHIN. As we all know—or we're certainly hopeful everyone knows—that's a large geographical area, especially in times of bad weather and winter months when travel is not easy. We don't have public transportation to help that support, so it's very challenging. My region has about 59, and again, not a single bed was available, and no one knew how soon one would open up.

Now imagine breaking the news to the parents, who are already feeling very helpless and alone: There is no bed, no in-patient treatment available for your child. Imagine how agonizing each day felt. Mr. Speaker, it's one of the most challenging—as I know you have probably shared in your distinguished career—and difficult things to be confronted with: a parent in their time of need, and sadly there isn't always that miracle cure, there isn't that miracle ability to change. I've certainly found that to be my most daunting, when someone comes in with a challenge like mental health and they're reaching out and they're grasping and they're desperate; it's very challenging because of the lack of resources. That's not necessarily a criticism. It's not meant as a partisan slight. It's just a case of, mental health truly is something that, as I've been here for my four years, I have certainly become much more aware of how much of a need there is, how much our society is being impacted and how we need to make sure we turn our focus and attention to this very challenging issue.

It was a similar pain felt by a mother who was frantically searching for treatment for her young daughter suffering from an eating disorder. "My child will die unless someone helps her," she pleaded. In the end, and I'm proud to say as an Ontarian, generosity prevailed. The family crowdfunded to pay for her treatment, as there was nothing available anywhere within a 200-kilometre radius of my riding. It again just speaks to the realities that many people in our great province face. Across our country this is actually a challenge, and it's something I think we all have to ensure we're making a priority, putting those resources in to ensure there are services as required.

It's not just parents who are disappointed with the state of our mental health system. The people who work in the mental health sector are frustrated too. We know the need is great, and it will take all of us to make it happen.

Our purpose with Bill 122 is to create an integrated mental health system that places people living with mental illness at its centre, a key theme recommended by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions spearheaded by my friend, our former colleague and MPP for Whitby, Christine Elliott. I'd also like to

acknowledge and thank the other member from our caucus who was part of the committee's work. That's my friend, colleague and MPP for Dufferin–Caledon, Sylvia Jones. Our caucus believes in the work of this committee and its recommendations, and we are supportive of this bill.

Bill 122 aims to improve health and quality of life for people living with mental health problems and illnesses. Specifically, this bill will put our mental health laws in compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. When a patient is issued their first certificate of continuation, they are entitled to apply for a hearing with the Consent and Capacity Board, the CCB, to confirm whether the prerequisites for involuntary status are met. This happens at approximately six and a half months. The bill will allow the board to hear an application made by the patient, or on the patient's behalf, before 12 months have passed. If a patient does not apply to have their detention reviewed, it will be automatically reviewed by the CCB every 12 months.

This bill will add a regulation-making power that will give rights advice to patients with respect to their ability to request orders regarding their detention. Prior to the amendments in this bill, patients would be detained involuntarily and would either stay at the facility for X number of days or they would be released; no changes to the terms of their detention were allowed.

The proposed amendments would give the CCB increased powers to make one or more of the following orders in response to a patient application at their certificate of continuation hearing:

- transfer the patient to another facility if the patient does not object. The board would also be able to hear an application from the officer in charge, the minister or deputy minister in relation to transferring the patient;
- place the patient on a leave of absence for a designated period upon the advice of a physician;
- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with a different security level and/or privileges inside or outside the facility;
- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to allow the patient to be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community; and
- direct the officer in charge of the psychiatric facility to provide the patient with vocational, interpretation or rehabilitative services.

The board will be required to make the above decisions while keeping in mind the following:

- the safety of the public;
- the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patient and others;
- the mental condition of the patient;
- the reintegration of the patient into society;
- the other needs of the patient; and
- that limitations on the patient's liberty must be the least restrictive, and commensurate with the circumstances requiring the patient's involuntary detention.

A physician may issue a community treatment order, CTO, to reintegrate the patient back into society. The

board would be required to consider that notice when reviewing the patient's involuntary status. A community treatment order is issued by the physician solely, and it is their decision alone to issue a community treatment order if they so choose. A community treatment order may not be suggested by anyone else.

As we have heard already, the challenge of mental illness and addictions in Ontario is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together and more than seven times that of all infectious diseases. Sadly, up to 70% of mental health problems begin in childhood and adolescence.

Its economic impact in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year. Therefore, providing better mental health services and programs is the smart thing to do. It's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that our generation is helping to change the attitudes towards mental health problems and mental illness.

To us, this is about inclusion, about challenging people's attitudes to mental health. It's about delivering more and better services so that all Ontarians can lead better lives. As I said earlier, it needs to be when the patient needs it. We have to ensure that time is of the essence.

1620

Finally, I want to recognize and commend the work of our local mental health champions in Bruce and Grey and the tremendous amount of work they have done and continue to do.

My colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Mr. Yurek, suggested—and I'm going to share it again, because I think it's a great corporate initiative—the Bell Let's Talk program. Certainly, I am proud to attend that every year. They do a great job. Again, that's something that anyone at any time can tap into.

He also referenced indirectly—but I'm going to talk about it a little bit more—community living and the challenge in regard to group homes and not enough spaces in group homes. We're hearing that. I formerly was the critic of community and social services, and certainly it was one of the biggest things that I was hearing. I was invited all over the province to hear from parents who were experiencing those challenges. Sadly, a number of the patients that need those services have a mental illness of some shape and description, and those services are significant and paramount. My colleague from Perth–Wellington has now taken over that critic's portfolio, and I know he's hearing the same things. It hasn't gone away. It's not going away. It's something that, again, we all need to be addressing, and ensuring that funds for those programs are at the front line, not eaten up in bureaucracy and administration.

Yolanda and Jamie Cameron of Wes for Youth and team; Phil Dodd, the executive director of Keystone Child, Youth and Family Services, and team; and Claude Anderson of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and specifically the 24/7 response line, and team: They are great, great resources in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Wes for Youth was founded by Yolanda and Jamie Cameron after losing their son Wes to suicide. I want to

extend special commendation to both Jamie and Yolanda, and especially Yolanda. I'm out a lot in my community on the weekends, and I see her tirelessly, at every event possible, making sure that people in our backyard are aware of the services that are available through Wes for Youth Online. She has worked tirelessly—Jamie as well. Jamie is just a little more in the background; he likes to be more in the background. I'm not certain, to be frank, that Yolanda likes really enjoys or likes this occupation, but she has poured her heart and soul into going out to our community, into establishing this Wes for Youth Online. Certainly, I think it was originally intended to benefit those in our backyard in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and neighbouring Huron–Bruce, but with the advent of the electronic age, this is a resource that anyone across the world can tap into and have access to in their time of need. Sometimes I think people may want to actually have an opportunity to tap into something that's not in their own backyard, because there may still be that concern of who knows and those stigmas that we've talked about before.

I want to just again extend my heartfelt thank you and appreciation to both Jamie and Yolanda, because they are going out and doing their best to ensure that no one else has to suffer what they've suffered through in the loss of a child. Thank you. My heart goes out. Thank you for the legacy you've created in honour of your son, Wes.

Wes for Youth aims to be a hub for youth mental and emotional wellness: support for children aged 13 to 19 in our region and, in fact, as I've mentioned, as a result of the electronic age, across the world. As Yolanda and Jamie explain, "Today's teens communicate and connect in a very different way than their parents. They are the first generation to be raised with texting, messaging, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. It keeps them 'in the loop' 24/7 and they rely on it for expression, integration, acceptance and approval. Social media is their comfort zone and where many go first, rightly or wrongly, for all their answers. If teens need or are willing to accept support or counselling for any problem, large or small, we believe many will choose social media before more traditional resources."

This group wants young people to know that it's okay to have problems and, most importantly, that it's okay to ask for help. They send out a message to anyone out there who is watching or listening, whether a grandparent, a parent, a brother, a sister, a cousin or a friend: Please, on both sides, never hesitate, if you're struggling and challenged, to ask someone for help. If you're on the other side, do what you can to provide that help, even if it's being there to make the call or to extend a resource, whether electronic or traditional, to try to do your part.

It's very challenging. You hear from parents who say, "I should have known. I should have seen something. I should have been aware." As a parent of two boys, it's one of those biggest things, certainly when it happens so close to your own backyard, where you start to challenge your own thinking. Am I paying enough attention? Am I really listening? I implore everyone.

But at the end of the day, for a parent, these types of things are not normally detectable. There is not something that is going to be like a lightning rod going off. To all of those families who have suffered or may, sadly, suffer: Don't beat yourselves up about it. Do what you can. Make sure. It's more important that we always offer an open and encouraging society that says, "Please, please ask for help."

If teens need or are willing to accept support or counselling for any problem, large or small, we believe many will choose this social media. This group wants young people to know that it is okay and, most importantly, that it's okay to ask for help. I encourage all of you to check them out at www.wesforyouthonline.ca.

Keystone is a not-for-profit, mainly provincially funded children's mental health centre serving Grey and Bruce counties. They run programs for teens at risk. Also, when a young person shows up in the ER, the hospital's emergency room, displaying suicidal tendencies or depressive behaviour, Keystone is notified and a risk assessment is done. With the help of the family, the youth is transitioned to the residential program.

I've met with Mr. Dodd a number of times. He and his team do remarkable work. One of the challenges that I continually hear from him is, again, having enough resources to do it in a timely manner whenever it is needed, because you can't control volumes. A number of our budget processes try to put a number on it based on a past year or on what the budget parameters should be. I think that one of the challenges that we all, as legislators, have to remember is that something like this is very daunting. It's hard to pin a number on it. We need to ensure the resources are there at any time when suicide happens.

I'm just going to talk a little bit here, as well, about a group, victim services. Very similarly, they came to me. In many parts of our province, these organizations are under stress in regard to funding resources, particularly in rural Ontario where we don't have all of those other amenities and services right close by. In my case, from top to bottom my riding is a three-hour drive in the best of weather. We are very disparate population-wise, but a large, large geography. Victim services, typically, have to be there. They get that call and they have to attend with, hopefully, the police, or get called by the police to attend. I'm going to talk about that a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to put a little thought out: They are a group, again, about whom we really have to be thinking. We can't just put them into, "This year, you're getting the same as last year," based on numbers that someone in a back room is crunching. It's about need. It's about the reality that they can't control the variables. They don't know if 50 more people this year are going to call in their time of need, asking for that help. How many people, after they've had some challenge and are that victim, are going to call? Those people may very well go into a depressive mental state. It's very implicit in what we're talking about in Bill 122, to ensure that we also are giving victim services, one of those agencies, our utmost respect and thought process.

The Canadian Mental Health Association Grey Bruce recently rolled out its mobile urgent response team, which is now operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The urgent response team, URT, works in collaboration with first responders to provide community-based crisis intervention for people in distress. Their mandate is to reduce unnecessary emergency room visits or revisits by providing immediate support in the community. The team has now expanded to nine full-time and two part-time Urgent Response Team members, stationed in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—typically covered through the Owen Sound and Markdale locations—and Huron-Bruce: Owen Sound, Southampton, Kincardine and Walkerton. So it's collaborative, particularly in my colleague's—Lisa Thompson from Huron-Bruce—and my ridings. They're integrated health care systems for the most part, three separate corporations, but we do work very collaboratively. Again, that's the reality of rural Ontario. We have to band together. We naturally collaborate and partner out of necessity.

They have a target response time of under 55 minutes. In the past, it was left to police to deal with clients experiencing a mental health crisis and take them to the hospital. That approach wasn't fair to police or to those in crisis. Those types of calls usually involve two officers and can take up to four hours, if police need to take the person to the emergency room. If an Urgent Response Team member can attend with police and make an assessment, it will prevent police and the client from waiting in the emergency room for hours, only for the client, potentially and in many cases, to be sent home again.

Again, I've had numerous police officers in my community come up and talk to me about this very issue. It's not that they don't have very basic training. They certainly are more qualified than I would ever be to go out on one of those responses. But I think what they're suggesting is that this is a very specialized area. It's not something they're dealing with on a day-in-and-day-out basis. They haven't received extensive and ongoing comprehensive training in the area of mental health, so they are concerned when they're going out: Are they able to give the best service possible? They are concerned about the time that is taken away, and then their communities aren't able to be defended—"protected" is probably a better word—by them, because they are doing something else.

1630

Again, it's not that they don't want to be doing this; they just feel very strongly that you want to have people with that specialized skill and the experience of doing this on a full-time basis to be there. It's certainly something I heard again when I spoke with Mr. Dodd. Those people are very experienced; they've gone into this as a vocation. Speaking through you, as I should, Mr. Speaker, it is their chosen vocation. It is something they get up every morning wanting to do. They want to get better and better, and they immerse themselves in it.

That is who I think you want, Mr. Speaker, if you have someone you are trying to help—a family friend or even

a stranger who is in need of services. You want a person who is truly trained, experienced and committed. Again, it's no slight on the police. They're actually being very good to say, "This isn't really our area. This is not something we have as much experience in as those specialists."

In my backyard, the 10 satellite hospitals throughout Grey and Bruce often have individuals present in their emergency rooms in a mental health crisis. These individuals may not be in a serious enough state to warrant sending them to our schedule 1 hospital in Owen Sound, Grey Bruce Health Services, for further psychiatric treatment. Previously, hospital staff would have to send these individuals home, only to have them return—sometimes within days or, sadly, even hours—because the circumstances that led to their crisis were not mediated. The urgent response team can prevent these revisits to the ER by meeting with the person at the ER and developing a plan to assist them in the community through short-term support or referral to other appropriate resources.

The recent Health Quality Ontario annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addictions have not improved in five years, and suicide rates have not improved in a decade. Mr. Speaker, that is not what we want to hear. These are areas of very big concern, particularly for those people who are suffering through these. We clearly need to do better for our most vulnerable.

Our caucus recognizes the devastating effects of mental illness and the attached stigma it has on the lives of thousands of Ontarians. We recognize that mental health is just as important as physical health, and we believe it needs to be treated that way. It's certainly something that in my time as a member of provincial Parliament—I've been privileged to represent the great people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for the last four years—I am hearing more and more about. I hear from the mental health community—the practitioners who are out there and the volunteers who are working—that mental health has never been in a priority state.

I go back to the select committee that I talked about. Certainly members of your caucus, the Liberal caucus and our caucus worked collaboratively on that. A lot of great recommendations came out of that, and I think it did raise the profile to understand that mental health is playing a significant role in our society. It needs to be a priority if we're going to address it appropriately.

The purpose of the bill is to come into compliance with an Ontario Court of Appeal decision. My colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London has, I think, made us aware that this was originally introduced in September, and yet it's a month until we've actually been able to start to speak about it. There are a lot of amendments that are going to be presented. It needs to get to committee, and it needs to get through, but it needs the time, because this is a very complex issue. It is something we need to give priority to, as I stated before, and I think that we, in

our caucus, want to ensure that it gets moved forward as quickly as possible, so that we can address those.

I'm just going to reiterate a couple of facts, because I think, due to the fact that for many years it maybe hasn't been as high-profile, and people have not made it the priority it probably always needed to be, but for whatever reason it wasn't brought forward. The challenge of mental illness and addiction is 1.5 times higher than all cancers put together, and more than seven times that of all infectious diseases. The economic impact of mental illness in Canada is estimated at \$51 billion per year.

I believe my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London stated that there were 4,000 suicides per year. Mr. Speaker, that simply is not acceptable. We need to do more.

I'm going to reiterate a couple of things as well. Mental health is, in my opinion, just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way. Mental illness affects Ontarians of every age and demographic, and yet services remain inadequate. Again, I'm saying thank you to those providers out there. I believe that anyone involved in mental health, depression and addiction is out there doing their very utmost best, obviously, every time. Again, I trust many of those people on the front lines. They pour their heart and soul into it. They, I trust, are never walking away in a time of need. But what we need to understand is that this is something that is growing. The numbers are getting larger. There are more people, which is a good thing, and the challenge becomes—I think many of our speakers, certainly my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London and I, talked about stigma. Many, many years ago, people wouldn't come out. They didn't want people to think, even, that they had a mental illness.

I had some folks in my office a couple of weeks ago very concerned about employment. Their son goes through some challenges from time to time, and they're worried from a conscience perspective: Do they actually tell the employer when they're going for the job interview that there are some challenges? Their fear is, of course, that they won't get the job if they're actually honest and sincere and upfront. On the other hand, they believe that they can certainly help a company, an organization; to be contributing members of society. And, frankly, they want to be. But there's that real challenge, that real balance.

They were very respectful of the employer's concerns, that you may not wish to take on an employee who has those types of challenges, because no one typically can know when it's going to strike. You really don't know how long that may be in place. So it's a double impact to the company. It was a really honest, sincere and thought-provoking discussion I had. You could see the challenges that are faced by a family with someone who has that. And then you go to the extreme, as I mentioned earlier, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the suicide rate, and people who get to that point and the challenges that they're facing.

I think that none of us want to be in a position where when that the call comes in that you have to say,

"There's not enough. I can't help you today." We need to find ways, we need to find models that work so that we are all in a place to be able to provide those services when they're needed.

Just last week, Health Quality Ontario's annual report highlighted the unfortunate reality—and I'm going to readdress this—that hospital readmission rates for patients with mental illness or addiction have not improved in five years. I say it time and time again in this House that—and again, it's kudos to our hospitals, the workers, the staff who work to operate our hospitals. This is not anything negative toward them, but the readmission rates have not improved in five years. That is our most costly form of health care, someone going through those doors, particularly if they're only going through the process where they're sitting there for a few hours, then they're being sent home and have to readmit. That is just a duplication.

Suicide rates, as I mentioned earlier, have not improved in a decade. With all of the resources that we have today, with resources out there like the Bell Let's Talk program and, in my backyard, Wes for Youth Online, it's hard to fathom, Mr. Speaker, that we haven't been able to move that gauge a little bit. I applaud people like Jamie and Yolanda Cameron for all the efforts they have put in, as I mentioned earlier. I just can't say enough about the energy, the tireless devotion and contribution that they've put in as volunteers, and the community that has banded around them. Wes for Youth Online has kind of come out of the legacy, if you will, of their son Wes. It's just been a remarkable program in my backyard.

They've raised a lot of money. There have been Trillium grants, which is a great program of our province. It goes back into a community. They've developed a centre so they can accommodate in a number of different fashions. They have hands-on people who are employed, who actually have those types of skill sets if someone walks in off the street or after having a bit of an incident and needs some kind of support, counselling resource. They have the online resource that anyone from anywhere can call into, or they can actually go online and send it in that way.

Many people still want that anonymity. They want to be able to deal with this on their own terms and conditions, and I think that's very important because, in many cases, we are, sadly, a judgmental society. Those are the stigmas we have to break down. We have to ensure that there's money, in my mind, in public health, Mr. Speaker, to our health units to be able to do the promotional side of making sure people are aware of the needs and the challenges of people who may have a mental illness out there.

On October 10, 2015, I believe, my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London would have been very integral to this, and on behalf of our caucus released a statement. I'm just going to read a little bit of that to you, Mr. Speaker, because I think it bears repeating, and everybody in here is encouraged to repeat at least portions of these words every day to try to raise that awareness:

"Statement from the Ontario PC Party on World Mental Health Day

"On World Mental Health Day, the Ontario PC Party stands in solidarity with Ontarians and Canadians directly and indirectly affected by mental illness.

"World Mental Health Day is an opportunity for Ontarians to learn and discuss mental health problems and understand that mental illness can affect anyone," stated PC health critic Jeff Yurek (Elgin–Middlesex–London). "The Ontario PC Party believes that mental health is just as important as physical health. We need to treat it that way."

"Affecting one in five Canadians, mental illness is a leading cause of disability in Canada.

"This year, World Mental Health Day is focused on dignity in mental health. Sadly, people with mental illnesses are often faced with misunderstanding, and even blame," added MPP Yurek. "The Ontario PC Party believes we have a responsibility to raise awareness of what can be done to ensure people with mental health conditions live with dignity, respect and inclusion."

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"I commend the numerous organizations and front-line workers providing leadership, increasing the awareness of, and working to, provide equitable access to mental health services," said leader of the official opposition Patrick Brown. "Mental illness affects Ontarians of every age and demographic and yet services remain inadequate. We need to work to combat the stigma associated with mental health, start talking and provide greater access to treatment."

Mr. Speaker, it's been an absolute privilege to stand here for a number of minutes today and share my thoughts on behalf of myself, my constituents in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and my colleagues. I recommend and encourage everyone to raise the bar, to be there to support mental health and make it the priority that it needs to be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to weigh in on this very important issue. I commend the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Elgin–Middlesex–London for speaking, ultimately, about the rights of Ontarians to have access to appropriate, affordable and accessible mental health resources. That's where the smart investment is. I think both speakers made those points quite well.

In my own region of Waterloo, just this weekend, the Waterloo Record has released a report. They've done an assessment of the cost—emotional, to the health care system, to the justice system—of not providing appropriate access to care. A lot of that stems from the stigma that is still very much attached to mental illness. But the stats are quite something, Mr. Speaker. The assessment was that between 2011 and 2013, Waterloo Regional Police responded to 4,516 calls about a mentally ill person, and 3,520 of them were about attempted suicide. This is the kind of research, this is the kind of evidence,

that should inform public policy on the issue of mental illness and the broader issue of well-being, because when you look holistically at the entire health portfolio, mental health has for too long been something that you do as an afterthought, as an aside.

When you look at the timing of this piece of legislation—the court made a ruling on the amendments needed to the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act dated back to 1996, but the ruling came down on December 23, 2014. This is October 2015, and we are just getting to this piece of legislation. It needs to be accelerated. There is an urgency to not acting. There's a cost to not acting.

I'm happy to be part of this debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I might, with your permission and indulgence, Speaker, just speak a little bit as a physician about the characteristics and the quality of symptoms of depression for those who are listening and, of course, in general support of this particular act.

Many issues occur, for example issues with regard to sleep: people cannot fall asleep or they take too long to fall asleep; even after sleeping a number of hours, they feel unrested or they may lose interest in things. We have a fancy word called "anhedonia" which means they lack the ability to experience pleasure in things that they experienced previously. They feel an enhanced sense of guilt. They lack energy. They have difficulties with concentration: for example, reading the same page again and again, and it just doesn't seem to take.

There may be an extreme increase or, usually, a decrease in appetite. There may be what we call psychomotor agitation or psychomotor anger, where people basically want to punch a hole in the wall. There even may be what we call suicidality, which means that folks may think it's better to go and meet their maker, to end it now and to basically leave this world.

All of these symptoms, Speaker, make up part and parcel of major depression, minor depression and, of course, there are many other subcategories. I cite these particular symptoms—which was quite a lengthy checklist—not simply to highlight, but perhaps just to help educate through this particular forum here in Parliament, as we're debating a bill that's very important, with regard to the Ontario Mental Health Act.

These are important issues. Something on the order of about 10% of the Canadian population suffers from these illnesses at any one time. Unfortunately, we are finding that young people, whether it's even in the teen years or in adolescence, may experience it. There are often many triggers. Whether it's a family breakdown, for example, moving away from home, a divorce, a tragedy, a widowing etc., we need to keep all of these things in mind as we're going to address these issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the comments of the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I guess all of us here as MPPs have had to deal with this issue in our ridings because of a sense of frustration sometimes that our constituents have with the system. I would like to speak to the care of people who have mental issues, and I would like to talk about the people who are directly involved with these things.

Certainly the police are. I hear stories of police who go to these calls and have to deal with a situation, and then have to go and sit in emergency rooms at times with people who are having these problems. They'll sit in these emergency rooms for six or seven hours sometimes waiting for a professional to come in and help treat the patient. I would hope that the government looks at this when looking at this bill, that we have the proper numbers of professional people to help out in these situations. Police are required to go to these calls, to keep the peace and certainly to look after the patient for a certain period of time if they have to go to a hospital to deal with this situation. But too often they get there and there is nobody to look after these people and help them with their problems.

We all know that there are all kinds of cutbacks going on with the health care system. So I worry that, even with legislation such as this, we're not going to have the numbers of qualified people to help with situations like this in emergency rooms, and police, who are really not qualified as psychiatrists to look after these patients, are going to have issues with mental health issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Good afternoon, Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair again this afternoon.

I'm adding my voice to those of the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's always a challenge to do so, Speaker, because they are two of the stronger voices in their caucus and they always bring great points to bear when they speak on such heavy issues as this.

There are 107 members of the Ontario Legislature at the moment, and I'm willing to bet that in each and every constituency office on a weekly basis two or three people come into our offices asking us to deal with issues relating back to mental health.

It could be anything from social housing to transportation, birth certificates, identification or whatever it is, but they come to our offices seeking help, and sometimes if we can't give them exactly what they want, their tempers can get a little overheated with our constituency staff. I know my staff deal with this on a regular basis. I have great respect for how calmly they deal with the people who come in with mental health issues, and I have great respect for everyone in Ontario who deals with those suffering from a mental illness on a daily basis.

I had four members of the police association from Windsor here last week. When I talked to them, they confirmed to me what their chief had been reported in the paper as saying, that more than 80% of the police calls coming into the Windsor Police Service are dealing with

issues around the Mental Health Act—people who have some triggers that have set them off and the police are having to deal with those issues. So there is no more important issue that we're facing than issues surrounding this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London for final comments.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you to those who commented on our hour leadoff on Bill 122. It's great to hear the discussion, and I look forward to the third party's hour lead, coming up next.

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I think it's good that we have these discussions with regard to mental health. It's good that we get information and keep the discussion going. As I said earlier, it's too bad that we didn't have a more substantive bill to deal with at this time. It's not too often that the government comes forward with changes to the Mental Health Act.

The amendments put forward by some psychiatrists who came and met with me, I think, are valid discussions to have at committee going forward. Hopefully, the government will come forward and listen to our side of the House in discussions and come up with some sort of resolution that ensures, with regard to the consent and capacity panel, that a psychiatrist is included on all types of panels going forward, so we have that expertise at that level.

I definitely want to thank the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound for assisting me in the comments today. What he brings forth from rural Ontario and the Owen Sound and Bruce area usually resonates throughout the province. That's an area that usually doesn't have the services available to them, but it does have a certain core population that does need access to those services. Each and every day that the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Bill Walker, is here with us representing his constituents is a bonus not only for them but also the Legislature as a whole.

I hope to hear quite a bit more debate. I know we only have five weeks left in order to get this bill passed and signed into royal assent. We have a short time period, and that makes it all the more important that this government actually sit down and listen to the opposition, because this is all that's left to ensure this bill gets passed. This government had a year to do it. They dragged on their time. We'll deal with what we have left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to do my one-hour lead on Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996—1996: Remember that number.

Let's start by saying, why do we have this bill? We have this bill because back in December 2014, a year ago or so, all five judges on the Court of Appeal looked at the Mental Health Act and decided that parts of it were unconstitutional and needed to be changed.

Basically, on December 23, five justices of the Court of Appeal of Ontario ruled unanimously in a case—I will refer to it a number of times; it's called P.S. v. Ontario, and "P.S." are the initials of a man you will hear a little bit more about—that portions of the Mental Health Act violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; more specifically, section 7 of the charter, which states, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice." Basically, there is a gap within the Mental Health Act such that people can be detained indefinitely, even though the Consent and Capacity Board does not have full power, in accordance with the principle of fundamental justice, to rule on the treatment or lack thereof of patients who are receiving such care. As such, long-term patients are being deprived of their right to liberty without procedures in place that protect the principle of fundamental justice.

What does that all mean? This man had assaulted a child, went through court and was sentenced to almost four years in jail. He spent his four years in jail, and on the day that he was to be released, he was brought, under a form 1, to a psychiatric hospital. For the next 19 years, this man stayed in the full-security unit of a psychiatric hospital.

Year after year, the Consent and Capacity Board—this is a board made up mainly of psychiatrists that every year has to review the cases—would see the man, make recommendations for his well-being, make recommendations for what could be the broad strokes of a care plan, but none of this was ever followed up. To make matters worse, this man was also deaf from birth, which means that he had difficulty communicating, like a lot of deaf people do, and none of his needs had been met, or were very sporadically met.

Although every year, when the Consent and Capacity Board would look at this man, who had a terrible, terrible diagnostic—he is, and doesn't deny it, a pedophile. Whenever he would come back in front of the Consent and Capacity Board, the Consent and Capacity Board would say, "Yes, this man still meets the threshold to be kept in a secure unit in a mental health hospital, but provisions should be made," because, first of all, he's deaf and also he is not a threat to people his own age. He is and will continue to be a pedophile. He is a threat to children, but he is not a threat to you and I, Speaker, because we don't look like kids at all. So there should be freedom and flexibility to allow him to have more freedom than a fully secure unit of a psychiatric hospital, because unless he comes in contact with a child, he is not a risk to people like you and I. He is a risk to children.

But none of this is presently feasible. You see, Speaker, the only thing that the Consent and Capacity Board can do is to say, "Yes, you go back into your secure unit." They can say, "Yes, we will send you to another secure unit in another psychiatric hospital," but that's it; that's all. They made the Consent and Capacity Board recognize that this same man—we're talking about 19 years. They tried to say, "Well, we would like you

to”—they recognized that he's not a threat to people that are not children, to say that he has special needs because he's deaf, but it didn't matter. They did not have any power. All they could do is make suggestions to better help this man, but none of those suggestions were ever followed. He was always in a maximum security psychiatric unit when they have recommended many times that a medium security unit would have been quite adequate to look after him. This was never done.

So looking at all of that—unfortunately, this man is not the only one. We are allowed to share some of his case because of the court, and all of that information has become public, but there are 338 other people like him who are going through the same thing. They have been in a secure unit in a psychiatric hospital being reformed—and “formed” means there is a process to get a person into an involuntary hospital. The first one is that you fill out a form 1. A form 1 would allow a hospital to keep you for 72 hours. Those are the most commonly used. Somebody has a mental illness. Things are not doing good. Most of the time, they're in the community. Things are not doing good. They are refusing treatment. They are becoming a risk to themselves or to society and a physician will sign a form 1. Most of the times, the police is involved.

My colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo talked about the statistics in her riding as to how often form 1s are used by police, who will go and apprehend the person although they have done nothing wrong. They will be brought to the hospital, and the hospital is allowed to keep them for 72 hours. If 72 hours is not enough, then you will need to sign a form 3. Form 1 gives you 72 hours. If 72 hours is not enough, we have a form 3. A form 3 will allow what is called committal; that is, to keep you in the hospital against your wishes for another two weeks. If, after two weeks, things are good, life is good, you get your plan of care, you go back into the community, or you stay in the hospital of your own free will to continue with your hospital treatment.

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If that doesn't work, then before form 3 expires, you sign a form 4 certificate. With a form 4 certificate, the first time, we keep you for a month. If a month is not enough, we can do another form 4; that will be two months. And then we can do a form 4 every three months for the rest of your life. The court doesn't think this is right. The court doesn't think that the balance has been taken appropriately. I will quote from the court decision to really set the tone, and this is something that New Democrats fully support. It goes a bit like this, and I'm quoting from a court document, so sometimes I'm not too sure how to pronounce some of the words but I will do my best, Speaker. Listen up:

“It remains to be seen whether Ontario will appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada”—they're not too sure; it doesn't look like we will. “However, so long as the Court of Appeal's decision stands, it calls for an important shift in the balance to be struck in Ontario's mental health law. Prior to the Court of Appeal's decision, the nature of involuntary detention under the MHA depended primar-

ily on balancing public protection against patients' best interests as determined by medical professionals. This left little room for patients themselves to play a role in determining the course and nature of their treatment.” Because at the end of the day, they can get better.

“The Court of Appeal's judgment effectively states that this balance must be changed by providing meaningful procedural avenues for patients to seek the accommodation and treatment they need to be rehabilitated while being involuntarily detained. The Court of Appeal's decision indicates that Ontario cannot wield the power to detain mental health patients indefinitely where such procedural protections are absent.

“Underlying the Court of Appeal's decision is an important shift away from traditional views of mental health institutions as warehouses designed to protect society from permanently afflicted individuals, and towards a view of these institutions as places of recovery designed to facilitate the reintegration of patients into society. For advocates of the civil rights of individuals with mental illnesses, this marks a significant step towards substantive equality.”

That is a substantive step, and a step that we have been told has to be taken before December 22 of this year. The court has given us one year to make those changes.

So what is in the bill? What kind of changes can we expect? There are quite a few and I think they're going in the right direction. One of the first ones that will happen is that the Consent and Capacity Board—remember, those are the people who review the cases every three months. You have to have your form refilled every three months. Every four times you fill out the form, you see the Consent and Capacity Board, so it turns out to be every year. Every year the Consent and Capacity Board will review the case, but now they will gain new powers to make orders concerning the matter of detention for involuntary patients who have been in hospital longer than six months. The Consent and Capacity Board right now can only say that you stay or you go.

If the bill is passed, the Consent and Capacity Board will be able to say, “Transfer the patient to another psychiatric facility,” if the patient agrees, does not object, and place the patient on a leave of absence from the hospital on the advice of a physician, including prescribed terms and conditions with which the patient and physician must comply. So it could very well be that, with the right set of medications, talk therapy and other plan of care, the person functions quite well. If they agree to take their medication, if they agree to the talk therapy and they agree to all of the elements of the plan of care, and a health care provider is there to make sure, then the person could be released. It would be the Consent and Capacity Board that would review all of this, but it would lead toward reinsertion into the community in a safe manner.

They can also direct that the patient be provided with a different security level or different privileges within or outside the psychiatric facility.

Remember this gentleman we were all talking about, Mr. P.S.? Well, the only thing that was available to him

was a maximum-security psychiatric hospital. It didn't matter that the Consent and Capacity Board said, "I think we should try him in medium security. I think we should try him in something different." They did not have any authority to mandate this. They could just make recommendations, and their recommendations were never followed. After the bill goes through, they will be able to dictate those changes, and those changes will have to be taken seriously and executed.

They will also be able to direct that the patient be provided with supervised or unsupervised access to the community—this is also something that the Consent and Capacity Board sometimes recommends, but if the hospital decides to ignore, they are free to do so—and order an independent assessment of the patient. Sometimes new treatments are available, or new assessment tools. You can really narrow where the risk to society is and where is the risk to self, so that if for a big part of the day and a big part of the patient's life they are at no risk to themselves or society—the risk can be narrowed down, mitigated and dealt with—then more opportunities open up.

Also, under these amendments, the province is seeking to allow physicians and nurse practitioners to sit on Consent and Capacity Board panels for less complex hearings. Right now, as I said, it is mainly psychiatrists who sit on those. Basically, we would free up some psychiatrists' time for the more complex hearings. Certainly the new hearings for involuntary patients who have been in psychiatric facilities for longer than six months would fall under that, so there would continue to be psychiatrists who would review those. But for some of the easier cases—often people who haven't been there that long or who did not ask for their case to be reviewed—physicians and nurse practitioners with an interest in mental health would sit on those.

I can tell you that in my community, many people with severe mental illness have as their primary caregiver a physician or a nurse practitioner. They may have a psychiatrist who sees them, but they are not their primary care. Even if they have a diagnosis of severe mental illness, it is their primary care provider—their family physician, their nurse practitioner—who looks after them, who adjusts their medications, who keeps them a safe, functioning, happy human being in the community. This is finally recognizing that, yes, family physicians and nurse practitioners play an important role in community mental health services. The bill would allow them to be recognized for their important role and give them the right, if they so choose, to sit on the Consent and Capacity Board.

Those are some of the biggest changes that the bill will bring. The timing of the Consent and Capacity Board hearings will change somewhat, and there are other related amendments, but before I get too far into it, I will explain a little bit more as to how this will all work.

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So we had the Ontario Court of Appeal that said, "You have to change the Mental Health Act. We give you 12 months to do this." The clock is ticking. We have until

December 22, two months or so from here. We have a bill that took nine months to be brought forward. Since December 23, everybody knew that the Mental Health Act had to be changed because the clock was ticking. Well, nothing happened, Speaker, for nine long months. The press wrote about it. People wondered about it. A whole bunch of people had opinions about what should happen, and the government went on radio silence for nine months.

Then, on September 23, Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996, finally arrived. It is in direct response to the Court of Appeal telling the Legislature that something needed to be done. They put that forward for first reading on September 23. On September 23, you could hear a common sigh of relief: "Phew! Finally, we have a piece of legislation that comes forward. Let's get on with this because we all know how to count: September, October, November, December." At the time, we had three months left to go from a bill with an act that is 20 years old—to go forward with a bill that needed to be changed, that the courts said, "You must change it." They took nine months, and then they gave us this bill, and everybody said, "Well, we have three months; we better get to it." A month later, nothing had happened.

On October 26, it finally comes back. Well, we have to talk about timing, Speaker, because—and it will become more obvious as I go on with my speech—the Mental Health Act is something that—it doesn't matter where you go in this province; it doesn't matter who you talk to in this province; anybody who has had any dealing with our mental health system will tell you that the act has to change.

I was on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, and I see some of my colleagues from that work here in the House with me. We did a tour of Ontario. We held hearings on 30 different days. We heard from 230 presenters from all regions of Ontario. We received over 300 submissions. We went north, east, west; we stayed in the centre; we flew to fly-in-only First Nations. I think we did a pretty good job of making sure that we heard from a wide variety of voices throughout Ontario. It didn't matter where we went; we heard the same thing over and over and over: Our mental health system was failing more people than it was helping.

Our mental health system is in need of mega reform. There have been over 16—I'm not exaggerating—different reports in Ontario that ask for reform. All of those reports—I'm only counting the reports that have been done by the Ontario government since 1983—only those reports. I'm not looking at the one done by the Senate, the one done at the federal level, the one done by public industry, the one done—there are many, many more. Just within the Ontario government, we have had 16 reports, all of them saying that we need to change, all of them making recommendations so that the Mental Health Act is amended to better respond to the needs of this very-much-changed mental health system.

If you can put yourself back in 1983, if you can put yourself back in 1996 and think about what people

thought about mental illness in those days—don't get me wrong. We still have lots of stigma attached to mental illness, but go back a couple of decades, and the stigma was huge. The language used to describe people who were facing mental illness was repulsive by the way we just rejected, refused to help, refused to care for, refused to have any empathy because you had a mental illness.

But things have changed. Look at what Bell Let's Talk did. They did fantastic work to show that mental illness is a disease, sometimes chronic, that can be managed, that can be cured, that affects one in 10 of us. That is the main reason we know a whole lot more. People are coming forward a whole lot more to say, "I have a mental illness, and I need help." I never thought I'd see the day where a police officer would come into my office and say, "I need help. I have PTSD." I never thought I would see the day where firefighters would come into my office and say, "I need help. I have PTSD." This is to show you how much ground we have covered, the long road that we have achieved in people coming forward to say, "We want access to mental health services. I have a mental illness. I want help for it, and I expect the mental health system to be there for me."

All of this was not thought of in 1983; all of this was not thought of in 1996, the last time we looked at this bill. So what I said in my two-minute response to the minister was that there's this huge pent-up demand for changes to the Mental Health Act. Then we hear that the Mental Health Act is finally open. People are going to want to be heard on this bill. People are going to want the government to listen to what they have been saying for such a long time, what the 16 reports commissioned by the Ontario government in those years have been asking for.

But now we have six weeks left, Speaker. We have six weeks to do first reading and have a few of my colleagues have comments on it, send it to pass second reading and have committees. I sure hope—and I guarantee you that I want to give people an opportunity to be heard. It is so disrespectful when people finally gain the courage to get involved with the legislative process to come to Queen's Park to testify in front of a committee—for a lot of them, this is the one and only time in their lives they will ever do this. Let's be respectful and listen to what they have to say, so that they can bring forward as good a bill as possible, even if we explain to them, in respectful terms, that we have to be limited in this.

I have told you what the bill sets out to do, but the more eyes that look at it, the more people think about it, the better we can make it to fulfill exactly what the Ontario Court of Appeal has told us to do. What we've got in front of us is a good first step. Can we do better? Absolutely. We all know that passing a bill is not an incremental process. It's not like, "Well, we'll do a little bit of it today and maybe in a couple of months we'll reopen the act and do a little bit more. Maybe next fall we'll reopen the act and do a little"—it's not like that, Speaker; 1996 was the last time. You have to wait a long time before a piece of legislation gets opened again.

So you see the dilemma that we are in. We've now boxed ourselves into six weeks to meet the court-imposed deadline. We have just started second reading today. Only three people—actually five: The Liberals shared their lead, and the PCs shared their lead—five people out of 107 will have had the opportunity to speak to the bill. We know that for the rest of the week, it is not on the docket to be brought forward again, which means that when we bring it forward again, the soonest we can bring it forward will leave us five weeks. One of those is a constituency week, when we won't be here. So, really, starting next week, the clock is ticking to do a whole lot of work.

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I don't understand why we have boxed ourselves—we didn't. Why did the Liberal government box all of us into this really, really tight deadline for something that is so much in need of sober second thought? We are talking about holding people in hospital against their wishes for decades at a time—not exactly a light type of decision. On the decision-ranking scale here, holding people against their wishes without their having done any crime—we're not talking about the justice system. The justice system has its own set of rules and they deal with it. We're talking about holding them in hospital against their wishes for months and years and decades at a time. I think it is worth all of our brain power to give it a little bit of time. Unfortunately, we're not afforded this little bit of time.

We already know that there are issues. I'm going to quote from a letter from Mr. Arthur Gallant. Why I'm bringing this up is because when the minister did his lead, he made the reference to the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. This is another council, and the name is long enough to explain to you exactly what it's all about: the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. This has been put together by our present Minister of Health to counsel him on mental health and addictions, including this bill that we are talking about. When he put the council together, he invited Mr. Arthur Gallant to be part of this council. Mr. Gallant looks young to me; he's 25 years old—

Interjection: That's young.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's young.

For the past 12 years, he has been a mental health advocate. Some of you will remember the name because it was one of five Canadian names at Bell's Let's Talk—Faces of Mental Illness. He was part of all of their commercials, all of their Twitter. You will remember some of the TV advertising that Bell did. He was one of the five people who were showcased in Bell's Let's Talk—Faces of Mental Illness.

In November 2014, about a year ago, he received an email from the office—oh, I forgot to say that his mother had a mental illness for a long time, that he was a mental health advocate and that he had been diagnosed with a mental illness when he was 13 while he was in the care of the children's aid society and has lived experience himself. So that's Mr. Gallant.

He received an email from the Minister of Health on November 14, asking him if he was interested in being appointed to the province's Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. I'm quoting from the letter:

"I was honoured to have received this email and felt as if I would have the ability to make a difference being part of this council.

"Once the membership list was released, I was disappointed to learn only two members (including myself) out of 20 members were ... representing the voices of people with lived experience." So the council is made up of 20 people; two of them have lived experience, and the rest of them are providers or work for the ministry. "Everybody else on the council were health care executives and there was no mention of any type of lived experience they might have brought to the table. I should also note that I was the youngest person appointed to the council by a long shot." As I said, he's 25 years old.

We all know that most severe mental illness strikes during adolescence. We saw that the first phase of the mental health strategy for the province of Ontario was to focus on youth. It was to focus on school services and community services and really focus on youth, for good reason. Most mental illness will show itself during adolescence or early adulthood. To have a young person on the council I think makes sense, especially a young person with lived experience, but only two with lived experience out of 20.

He goes on to say, "Initially, I took this news in stride. I thought my work was cut out for me, and I was determined to ensure my voice was heard and that I was adequately representing all Ontarians with lived experience on this council.

"From our first meeting back in February 2015, I was quickly shut out. Nobody was asking me for my advice, and whenever I spoke, I was interrupted and shut down. I felt as if I was simply keeping a seat warm during council meetings. I was also excluded during council conference calls.

"At the beginning of the council's term, working groups were formed to break down some of our work. At our first meeting, I witnessed council chair Susan Pigott going up to some of the members, asking them if they wanted to be chair of any of the working groups. I emailed Ms. Pigott, suggesting somebody with lived experience be appointed chair of one of the working groups. My request was denied. When I asked for feedback from Ms. Pigott as to why somebody with lived experience could not be chair of one of the working groups, she refused to give me any sort of rationale. Instead of being chair of one of the working groups, Assistant Deputy Minister Nancy Kennedy offered to have me make public appearances on behalf of the council and suggested I seek some sort of leadership opportunity from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. None of these opportunities ever came to fruition.

"Over the spring and summer, my frustrations continued to build as I felt shut out during council meetings

and didn't like that I was being excluded from council conference calls. It became clear to me that the council did not value the advice of its two members with lived experience, and instead favoured the health care executives.

"I spent all summer reaching out to the council secretariat, Ms. Pigott, various ministry officials, and Minister Hoskins's office. My calls and emails went unanswered.

"Earlier this month, I reached my breaking point and made the decision to resign from the council. When I asked Ms. Pigott for a meeting to discuss my resignation, she once again refused and felt as if such a meeting would be counterproductive. All follow-up emails to Ms. Pigott have been ignored. Minister Hoskins and his staff continue to ignore my phone calls and my emails. While I spoke directly to the new Assistant Deputy Minister of Health, he refused to offer any concrete solution to continue to include the voices of people with lived experience on the council. He also says the ministry will not pressure nor request for Ms. Pigott to speak to me, and the choice to do so remains solely hers.

"I was concerned that if I resigned from the council, that I would have regrets. Based on the government's treatment of me after submitting my resignation, it has simply affirmed my decision.

"I resigned from this council"—and I'm referring to the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council—"because nobody was listening to me. The work of this council is important and I believe the government had the right idea in forming the council. Capturing the voice of people with lived experience is paramount. Appointing two members to the council with lived experience was a big first step; however, to appoint us to the council without treating us as equals isn't right and it isn't fair. All I was ever asking for was an opportunity to be heard. I wanted my advice to be just as valued and considered just as seriously as the health care executives on this council. Instead, I was shut out!

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"The experience [of] patients and survivors of the mental health care system is crucial. They bring a perspective that is unique, one of a kind, honest, that you can't get from anybody else. In order to properly ... execute the province's mental health and addictions strategy, the province needs to capture the voice of people with lived experience. Clearly by appointing me to the council there was an attempt to do so, but the province fell short....

"I have written a letter to the Premier's office several weeks ago," at the same time as he wrote to me, "and I have yet to receive a response. I am reaching out to your offices in the hopes that you can also put some pressure on the Ministry of Health to change how it treats people with lived experience. I don't like how this council is functioning and I don't appreciate having my calls and emails unanswered.

"Should you or your offices have any questions, feel free to be in touch with me.

"Yours very truly,

"Arthur Gallant."

I did reach out to him, Speaker, and we have permission to share his letter, which I read into the record today. I did that to really illustrate the point that although we have a piece of legislation that is in response to what the Ontario Court of Appeal had said we must do, and although there are some really good steps taken in the bill in front of us, we can do better. There are people with lived experience. Those are people who lived under form 4. They know what it is to be on the other side. They know the frustration that comes from wanting something that is reasonable, wanting something that is just and fair, and being denied because of a process.

But if this young man—who, as I said, is a very eloquent speaker about the face of mental illness—if this young man who was personally invited by the minister himself to come and share his experience with council was shut out, I'm really afraid that when it will come time for those people who will want to come and address us in committee, the same thing will happen: that we will have a leader on the other side who will time-allocate this thing, that we will have, like, two hours for hearings for hundreds of people who want to be heard.

Will we do a step in the right direction? Yes, the bill is a step in the right direction. But will we do as good as we can so that people who have to live under those orders that force them to stay in secure units in psychiatric hospitals are dealt with in a way that respects their human rights? I'm not sure. I think we are setting ourselves up for a half-baked bill, a bill that will fulfill what the court has ordered us to do, but a bill that will miss an opportunity to bring fairness to people with mental illness, a bill that will miss an opportunity to show that since 1996, when this bill was written, to 2015, or 2016, really, by the time the bill is put into effect—that during those 20 years, perceptions toward mental illness have changed, that opportunities for people with mental illness have changed, and that this has to be taken into account.

I want to come back to the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This is something that everybody in this House agreed to. When we released the committee findings—the report is very short, by the way: 18 pages. That's it. That's all. Anybody can read this in an hour: 18 pages of recommendations from months and months of work, and 23 recommendations. I bring that forward because, out of the 23 recommendations, half of one has been acted upon, Speaker. We have 23 recommendations and, out of all of those 23, half of recommendation number 11 has been acted upon. It had to do with use and abuse of prescription narcotics. The rest have not.

Yet, there we stood, and most of the people who were there are still here. We had consent from all three parties. This is a report that was unanimously supported by all three parties to move forward toward better mental health and addictions services. Within this report, there are recommendations to change the Mental Health Act. We have already had all sides of the House agree that we need to change the Mental Health Act. It is in our recommendations, and I will read them into the record because I'm afraid some of them have been forgotten. “The core

basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system navigator and appropriate community services.” And we have the link as to what needs to be changed in the Mental Health Act.

Recommendation number 21: “The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should create a task force, incorporating adequate representation from, among others, mental health clients and their caregivers as well as mental health law experts, to investigate and propose changes to Ontario’s mental health legislation and policy pertaining to involuntary admission and treatment.” Sound familiar, Speaker? “The changes should ensure that involuntary admission criteria include serious harms that are not merely physical, and that involuntary admission entails treatment. This task force should report back to the ministry within one year of the adoption of this report by the Legislative Assembly.”

That was a report that was done by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions. This committee was created by this Legislature. The report was tabled. It was agreed upon by all sides. It talks about what the court also talked about, that we needed to work on changing the Mental Health Act. It said that it wanted a report back to this House within the year, and nothing has been done. Yet, we have an opportunity with this act being opened to do something that we already know everybody agrees to.

Recommendation number 22: “The task force created to investigate and propose changes to Ontario’s mental health legislation and policy should also investigate and propose changes to the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004. The changes should ensure that family members and caregivers providing support to, and often living with, an individual with a mental illness or addiction have access to the personal health information necessary to provide that support, to prevent the further deterioration in the health of that individual, and to minimize the risk of serious psychological or physical harm.” That is also in the report.

I wanted to bring that forward as an example of work that has been done. Remember: There have been 16 such reports. In all of those 16 such reports done by this Legislature, by the Ontario government, they all asked for changes to the Mental Health Act. Some of the changes that they have asked for are directly related to what the court has asked us to do. The court has asked us to look at involuntary confinement, and this is what recommendation number 22 of the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions final report also talked about, and it is an opportunity to move this forward.

I can tell you, Speaker, that there will be people who will want us to do that work, who will want us to say, “Listen, the court has asked you to look at involuntary”—I say “confinement,” but that’s not the right word. It just escapes me right now.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Detention. Thank you. We have work that has been done for the exact same process of involuntary admission and detention into a psychiatric facility, but I'm afraid, with the very little bit of time that we have allocated to this, we won't be able to. Let's get this right, Speaker.

When I took the briefing on this, there was a sense of panic in me because I know that the deadline is there. So in my panicky state, I asked, "What will happen on December 23?" Because not too many bills go to second reading, committee, third reading, and royal assent in six weeks—very, very few.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Only when time-allocated.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Even with time allocation, it'll be a tough go. But, yet, can you hear the tick, tick, tick of 339 people who are presently held on a form 4 in maximum security psychiatric hospitals throughout our province, who are also going, "Tick, tick, tick, my turn will come up. This law is null and void. Here's my key to freedom. Let me out now. You have no right to told me back"—because the court said that we had no right to hold them back. When the judge, and I will quote from the judge again, knew that we could not simply open the door and let the 339 people who were presently on repeat form 4 go out, he did say that—give me a second to find exactly what he said. "By failing to provide the board with powers"—he basically says that he would give us a year to do this. He was ready to do this right now, but understood that there were going to be severe implications if he did that, so he gave us a year to do that.

So here I am at my briefing, and I asked the questions that I'm sure everybody being briefed would have asked: "What happens if we miss the target? What happens if, on December 10, we rise and we have not quite finished this bill? December 22 rolls around and it's 'Merry Christmas, everybody. Here's the door. See you soon'?" What I was told was that they have already asked the court this question, and the answer that came back was, "You will get a three-month extension." So quickly, you go December 23, January, February—all right. We will have been back in here for all of three to four weeks. Okay. We've just gained three to four weeks. This is still a complex piece of legislation. Or you don't get the grant for an extension and, on 23rd, you have to re-form everyone. Basically, you have to start back at—remember, at the beginning of my speech, I explained form 1, 72 hours; form 3, two weeks; form 4, one month; re-form 4, two months—you get the point.

Interjection: It's just revictimization.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Revictimization, but can you see that some of them don't want to be in a psychiatric hospital anymore? Some of them would very much like to be free in the community, without any treatment plan, without any medication, without anything, and they can hear their clock ticking, too.

I don't want to scare people. That's not what I'm there to do, but there is a risk, Speaker. There is a risk. To say that we will re-form all of those people through form 1, form 3, form 4, and everything will go clickety-clack; and that the psychiatrists will be there in time to sign the

report so that we—who are we kidding here? Psychiatrists are human beings just like everybody else. You have to re-form everybody for 72 hours, and then do form 3, and 72 hours later—this is not going to happen. Some are going to fall through the cracks. Some are going to bolt out the door.

The question remains: Why didn't the government bring this bill forward sooner? I don't understand those things. It's not like we're opposed to it—not at all; much to the opposite. It takes a court order to get the government to talk about mental health. Speaker, I could talk about mental health every day.

I know that we fail more people than we help. I know there are solutions that exist in those 16 reports that are gathering dust that would make our mental health system way better than it is now. I know there are people in need, right now, who don't get the care they need. I know there are kids on wait-lists who will age out of the kids' system before they get onto any sort of support. I want our mental health system to do better.

Finally, a court mandated us to talk about mental health in this House—yay—and then I have this thing that comes in September and second reading that starts on October 26, with a deadline that's keeping me up at night. Why is it that every time we talk about mental health, it has to be so difficult? Why is it that there has to be kicking and screaming before the government will put a piece of legislation forward that helps people with mental illness? I don't get this. I don't like this. I want us to do better. We owe it to them to do better than this, but I'm stuck with a government that controls the agenda.

They say, "Oh, it'll be discussed at House leaders'." Well, without breaching any secrets of the House leaders' meetings, let me tell you that there is no such discussion. They come with the schedule and say, "We're talking about 122 on Monday afternoon, and this on Tuesday, and this on Wednesday, and this is it." If it's not there, it is not there. It's not like I can say, "Hey, listen. I'm really worried. Bill 122 has to be talked about again." If it were up to me, we would talk about nothing else this week so that we have a chance to make this bill as strong as we can, so that it can move forward before Christmas—but not at all; we have it on the docket once, today, and for the rest of the week, forget it. It's disappointing.

Je viens d'apercevoir qu'il ne reste que trois minutes 50 secondes, et j'aimerais dire quelques commentaires en français.

Je suis en train de parler de la Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé. La raison pour laquelle on parle de ce projet de loi est que la Cour d'appel de l'Ontario nous en a obligé.

Il y a des gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale et qui sont confinés dans un hôpital psychiatrique à cause d'une procédure qu'on appelle formulaire numéro 4. Avec ce formulaire-là, on peut garder les gens dans un hôpital psychiatrique à l'infini. La Cour d'appel de l'Ontario a regardé ça et a dit que ça devrait être changé. Ils nous ont donné 12 mois pour faire le changement.

Douze mois pour faire le changement? Les 12 mois ont commencé le 23 décembre 2014. Neuf mois plus tard, le gouvernement a présenté le projet de loi 122. C'était au mois de septembre. On a dû attendre un autre mois avant qu'ils l'amènent, et ça nous amène à aujourd'hui. Donc, entre le 23 décembre et le 26 octobre, très, très peu a été fait. Pourtant, c'était une belle opportunité puisqu'on va rouvrir la Loi sur la santé mentale pour faire des changements à cette loi-là.

Il y a eu 16 différents rapports qui ont été faits par les différents gouvernements de l'Ontario pour apporter des modifications à la Loi sur la santé mentale. La loi n'a pas été changée depuis 1996. Entre 1996 et 2015, il s'en est passé des choses dans la santé mentale. On ne regarde plus la santé mentale et on ne la traite plus de la façon qu'on l'a traitée en 1996. Tout a changé. Que tu regardes les traitements, que tu regardes les médicaments, que tu regardes la façon dont les gens interagissent avec les gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale, tout a changé. La loi aussi doit changer.

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On a une opportunité—ce n'est pas une opportunité; on a une obligation d'y faire des changements parce que la Cour d'appel nous a dit qu'on devait faire des changements. De nous limiter à une période de temps de cinq semaines pour faire des changements à une loi qui a tellement besoin de changements, je trouve ça un manque de respect total—un manque de respect pour nous et un manque de respect pour les gens qui ont des problèmes de santé mentale. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi le gouvernement est si négligent quand ça vient à s'assurer qu'on a un bon système de santé mentale et de bonnes lois pour l'encadrer.

Mais les faits demeurent. On a un projet de loi qui doit passer la deuxième lecture, aller en comité, faire clause-par-clause et recevoir troisième lecture, ainsi que la sanction royale, avant le 10 décembre. C'est quasiment du jamais vu, même avec un projet de loi pour lequel on a tellement de gens qui veulent être entendus et tellement de gens qui veulent avoir des changements.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to put a few things on the record regarding Bill 122. Bill 122 has some good steps in it to look at the directive that was given to us by the Ontario Court of Appeal. This opportunity to open up the Mental Health Act will come with a lot of people wanting to be heard. I sure want to be respectful to everybody who wants to be heard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for her comments.

I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 122, the Mental Health Act. I want to begin by thanking the minister for his work on this file. Also, I know the parliamentary assistant has done a great bit of work on this as well. I know it's a difficult file for the minister, and I want to begin by acknowledging his efforts in this regard.

I've heard him speak on this particular legislation, Bill 122, the Mental Health Act, and the work that went into bringing the legislation forward on two or three different

occasions. I know it is, without a doubt, a difficult file for him, where he has tried very hard, as best he is able, to balance the rights of the individuals who are the subject of this discussion with the broader public safety issues that are associated with what we're bringing forward. It's not easy.

At the root of this is a Court of Appeal decision that has decided that the involuntary detention of mental health patients in psychiatric facilities beyond a fixed period of time is seen to be in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms—I think it's section 7 of the charter. It's been ruled that the legislation, as it's currently constructed, does not accommodate the charter provisions. So the minister has been tasked with bringing forward a piece of legislation that will try and bring the Mental Health Act into conformance with the charter.

I know that he has brought amendments forward that we're hopeful will receive the support of both sides of the House so that we can move forward on this—as I've said, a very, very difficult issue. The more we're talking about mental health and its issues in the broader public today is always a good thing. Helping to do anything that we can to remove the stigma associated with mental health and its consequences is a good thing. I'll close on that front, Speaker, as my time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions or comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That was Frank Underwood, but I don't have a ring on.

It's a pleasure to comment on the speech by the critic for the third party. I give her a lot of credit. She does her homework, she does her research and she always has a very, very interesting and informative address for this Legislature. I appreciate the work that you do, I say that to the member from Nickel Belt.

To the Minister of Natural Resources: He's right. The more we talk about this, the better it is, but we must do more than talk as well. I'm going to have a chance, I hope—I hope, before they invoke closure on this bill, I'm going to have a chance to speak. I am already, I say to Lucas over there in the under press, anticipating the closure motion on this bill, which will come, because this is how this government works. But I'm hoping that I'll have a chance to speak a little bit on a personal basis.

My grandmother spent the last 32 years of her life in a mental institution, when things were treated a whole lot different than they are today. Are there improvements that could be made? Yes, there are. This bill will start working on that, but we have to really rethink—not just talk about it—how we deal with people who are suffering from mental illness. I was just speaking to a constituent of mine today, a gentlemen who is under the auspices of Community Living. He's now incarcerated because of, yes, inappropriate behaviour. But we have to ask ourselves, are those the kind of people that we should be having in our correctional system, or should they be taken care of in our psychiatric system?

There are shortcomings from every direction. I understand the problem is bigger, sometimes, than we can solve in a day. This is a good start, but as I said to the

minister, yes, we need to talk about it, but we also have to work to find solutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to the member from Nickel Belt for doing her hour lead in such a comprehensive way and giving us the context of how this bill came to this place and why it is so important.

For me, I just want to say that there are a number of issues that actually are playing themselves out right now in the province of Ontario, but when this—she mentioned the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions—committee travelled around the province and heard first-hand what the real experiences of people in this province are with regards to accessing resources, and the recommendations came out, this was a moment of hope for people outside of this place.

I was at the time the chair of the mental health coalition, which brought school boards and all partners, from public health to police forces, to the table. We were genuinely hopeful that these recommendations would be put in place, and to hear that really only half of one of these recommendations has been acted upon is disappointing. I must say that there is an opportunity here, though. The act is open; we have the chance to show real leadership on the mental health portfolio. Just to revisit the fact that we have people who have been detained for so long, and that balance of their rights and their illnesses and the lack of control that they have and the options that they have, is discouraging.

One of the recommendations from this report said, “The core basket of mental health and addictions services should be available to the incarcerated population, and discharge plans for individuals with a mental illness or addiction should be expanded to include the services of a system....” For me, coming from Waterloo region, it’s hard not to think of Ashley Smith, who had a disgusting experience in the justice system, which ended in her suicide while being detained.

This is the opportunity for leadership, and thank you very much to the member from Nickel Belt for her leadership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It’s a pleasure to respond to the member from Nickel Belt. Her presentation, obviously, showed her passion for mental health.

What I would like to say is that there have been significant investments by this government and previous governments in mental health. The challenge, as we all know here, is that we have limited resources to work with. It’s very hard for us to meet the needs, so we have to continually work to make sure that we are investing in the right way to make sure people get what they need.

I take to heart what the member from Nickel Belt said in terms of the timing of the bill; we have a fairly tight time frame right now. I’m encouraged by the fact that the

bill was tabled on September 23, which I think is four weeks or so—ample time. I’m sure the member has been briefed on it and has had a chance to look at it. I haven’t heard a lot of suggestions in terms of amendments to the bill in the debate today, but I’m encouraged by the fact that we’re talking about it, and there’s some suggestion that there’s an understanding of the deadline.

As the Minister of Natural Resources said, this is a very difficult issue. This is balancing people’s rights to their liberty with their interest and the public interest. The Mental Health Act did not provide for the continued committal to be commensurate with the circumstances that existed. This is a very specific piece of legislation to address a very specific need, with a timeline on it.

We know what the task is in front of us. We all agree that this is something that we have to do, and I think it’s entirely doable for us to do this. We don’t have to open up the Mental Health Act in order to achieve what we need to achieve to make sure that we comply with the court order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Nickel Belt for final comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Court of Appeal said, “The declaration of severance was suspended for 12 months so that Ontario’s government could respond with legislative changes.” That has to do with the fact that the court decided that there was a breach of the rights of P.S. under the charter and that we need to make changes. The changes will be changes to the Mental Health Act. The Mental Health Act has not been changed for 20 years and is in dire need of change. Many, many different reports say that the Mental Health Act needs change.

So we have this piece of legislation that more or less complies with what the court has asked us to do. As the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry said, the minister put forward, to the best of his ability, what could be a response to the court—and I have no doubt that the minister has many abilities to do this, but if you take the abilities of 107 of us, we have even more. If you take the time to listen to what people who want to be on the record have to say, we have an opportunity to respond to the spirit of what the court wanted us to do even better, and we will go into this when some of my colleagues take the floor later on, whenever later on will happen.

I wanted to set the tone today: that it is going in the right direction, but we can do better than this for an issue that is so fundamental to the freedom of people with mental illness; that is, to be held against your will in a psychiatric hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d like to thank all members for the debate this afternoon. The time for debate has now expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now just shortly after 6 o’clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1803.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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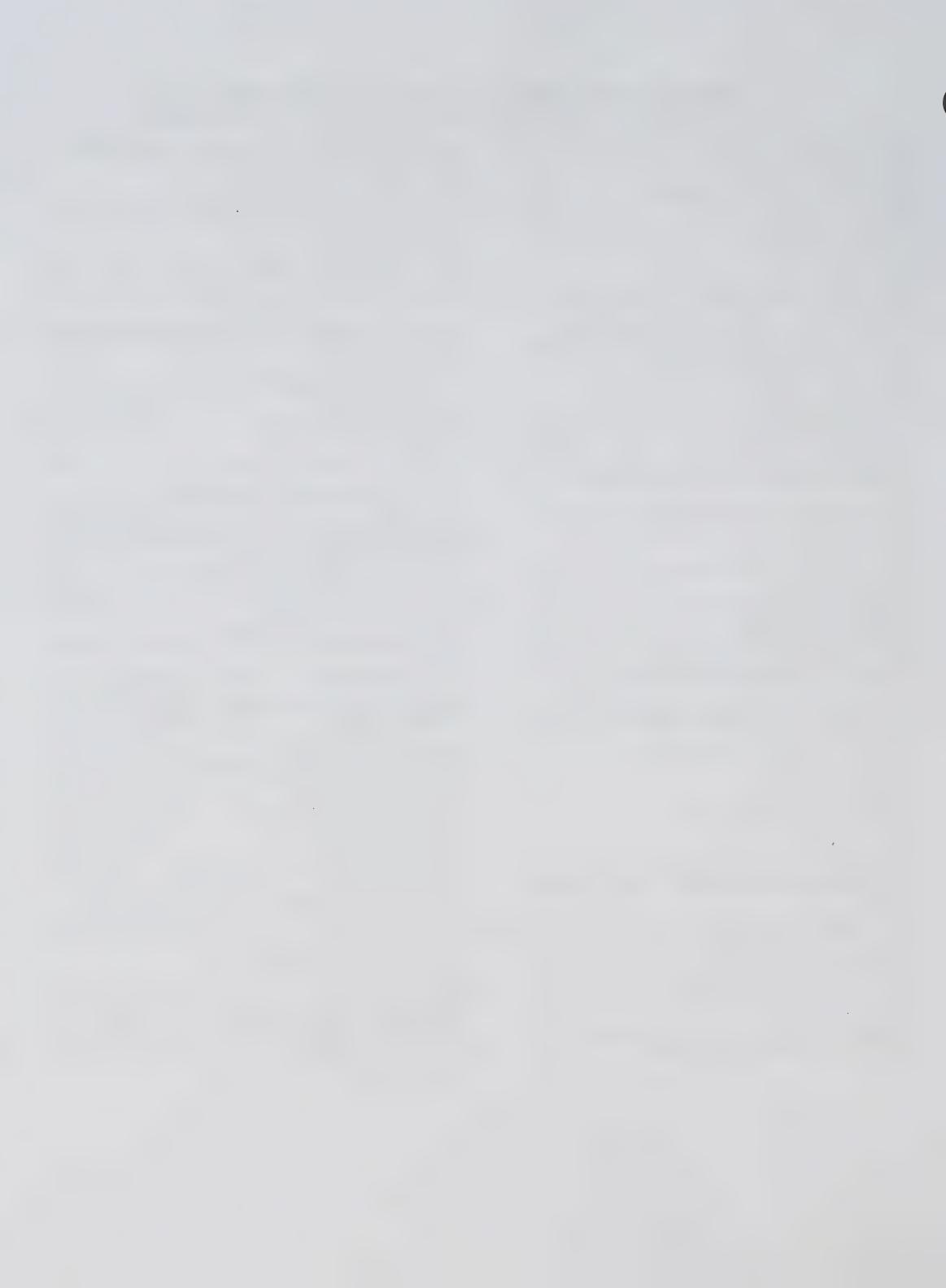
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No. 112



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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 41st Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 27 October 2015

Mardi 27 octobre 2015



**Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac**

**Président
L'honorable Dave Levac**

**Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The lead was stood down, so I'll be doing my lead this morning.

I am honoured to do my lead on this bill, Bill 115, which deals with electoral boundaries. First and foremost, I think it's important to note that the bill is an important bill. It addresses the fact that there has been a significant increase in population. Many areas in our province, many ridings, have a population that's far beyond what the provincial average for a riding was intended to be. As a result, I know there are some members in the House now that have some of the largest ridings not only in Ontario but, actually, in the country. Particularly in my region, the Peel region, we have a number of ridings which are amongst the largest in the country.

The recent federal election allowed for new boundaries which made the average population closer to the provincial average and, in addition, the federal average. We know that roughly 100,000 people is what is intended to be the average. In my riding, I represent close to 220,000. Other ridings in Brampton—Brampton West is one of the largest in the entire country at 240,000 people. These ridings are significantly large, and being so large, it makes it difficult to be able to reach out to all these individuals.

More importantly, for a representational democracy, there are people that are not having a proportional voice in the Legislature. That is an important point. If we respect the idea that in a representational democracy individuals are able to vote for someone to represent them, to be their voice in Parliament, and the population is not accurately or proportionately represented, people are losing their voice in Parliament. So it's important that this change has been brought forward. In effect, in my riding, with 220,000 people, there should be two members representing those voices, to make sure their voices are proportionally heard here.

In addition, the budget that we have that allows us to communicate with our ridings, with the people that live in our ridings, to provide them with updates on what's going on, to provide the services and to communicate with them, was designed to reach out to those approximately 100,000 people. In ridings where the population far, far exceeds that, our resources are tapped, and it makes it quite difficult to be able to reach out to everyone to provide the necessary updates and information.

So one of the issues that I'd like to bring up in this debate is that until this change takes place—this change that recognizes that certain ridings are far too large—the government should implement some measure to allow for members who have a large riding. I know that there is a member in the Ottawa region who also has this issue and raised this issue and championed it, so I am honoured that she raised that issue. But it's important that we have, perhaps in the interim, some funding allocated (1) to address the fact that there are ridings that are quite large and (2) to be able to provide those ridings with an increased budget to be able to communicate with and serve their riding appropriately until the changes take place. That's an issue that I'd like to raise.

If we look at the breakdown in terms of where the riding boundaries have been changed, most significant changes are in the GTA. There are significant changes also in other urban centres across the province. In the GTA, we've increased the number of seats, particularly in the suburbs, and it's important that we are representing our populations and providing them with representation through increased members.

While on one side, we're doing a lot of good work now in terms of representation based on population, this debate allows for an opportunity to talk about other areas where we need to improve representation. While we are certainly moving towards better representation by population, though this bill doesn't purport to do it, I think it's important to start talking about what we can do as a

Legislature to increase representation in other demographics, beyond just population.

There are a couple of areas that are important for us to address. One area is the fact that we are failing in this province, in this country and certainly in the entire world when it comes to proportional representation of women not only in positions of power in politics but in positions of power broadly speaking.

Let's talk about politics specifically. It's a tremendous honour that we have been moving in the direction where there has been increased representation by women, but it's something that we're certainly failing at, and it's certainly a major problem. It does not do justice to our democracy when we are so far behind in representation when it comes to women in politics. I think we need to start implementing strategies around how we increase that and what the government can do to increase that. There are a couple of strategies that have been discussed before, and one of those strategies—we can break those strategies down into two loose topics or subdivisions. One is supporting organizations that are already doing a lot of work in this area: non-government organizations which are encouraging women to get into politics.

I want to give credit to the member from Parkdale-High Park, who implemented a program, Girls in Government—an excellent program. One of the most important things to get into politics, or to get into any field, is that if you are exposed to that field, you're more likely to consider it as an option. The first thing that this program that the member from Parkdale-High Park initiated does is that it provides an opportunity for young women in high school to be exposed to politics, to be exposed to the Legislative Assembly in Ontario or to go to the House of Commons in Ottawa just to see what politics is all about.

The second thing that this program does, which is absolutely essential, is that it provides an opportunity for young women to meet other women who are politicians so they can kind of see, "Hey, that's something I could perhaps do in my life, that's something that I can relate to, that's something that perhaps would be a career I might consider." I think it's absolutely important that people, especially young people, are exposed to various careers, meet those people face to face and are able to ask them questions and interact with them. It's only through that interaction, that experience, that as a young person one can visualize themselves in that position. I think that's incredibly important, and it's a great program.

I have to give credit to the Ontario Legislature for taking this initiative, which was absolutely needed, to have a particular wall of the House that's dedicated to the women who have been involved in politics in this assembly, whether it's on the political side or the bureaucratic side. I think that was a phenomenal initiative. I think more can be done, but it's important to give credit where credit is due.

That initiative basically displayed the women who have been involved or are currently involved, past and present—ranging from the Auditor General now, who is

a woman, which is an amazing achievement, having that representation by such a skilled and qualified Auditor General. It provides that amazing representation so that women can say, "I can achieve the highest position, essentially, in terms of an auditor in the province of Ontario." That's a phenomenal example of representation.

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Having the privacy commissioner—the previous one was a woman—represented on that wall is a great thing, and now seeing a Premier and the leader of our party being women is a phenomenal example of representation, showing young women, or other women in general, that you can be involved in politics and achieve the highest level in politics. That's a great step forward. So that's the non-government and some of the government side, making sure that the place we call the assembly for all people in Ontario, Mr. Speaker, is not only accessible, but that when you walk into the building it represents the people of the province. That was a good initiative.

But what more can the government do to make it easier and more accessible and encourage more women to get involved in politics? To do that I think there needs to be a discussion around some of the barriers to political life and what the government can do around ensuring that those barriers are addressed. One of the issues—we have a colleague who has experienced that first-hand—is that it's very difficult to be in a new family, to have children, and to be in politics. I know many people have struggled with that. The government and the Legislature can do more to make sure there are accommodations in place so that it's not something that prohibits people or creates a barrier to becoming a politician or being involved in politics. So we need to discuss what we could do in this assembly to make sure that there aren't these barriers or, if there are, ways we can address them by providing services, maybe in the assembly, that could address some of these concerns.

I think it's important that we create an inclusive environment. If we want to encourage—and it's absolutely something that I want to do and I'm sure many people in this House do—more women to be involved, we have to make sure that we have the services available to make sure that women are supported. I think that's incumbent on us as legislators to encourage more equal representation. That's a large area that we need to address in terms of improving our representation: improving it by increasing the proportion of women who are in politics. To put it bluntly, it's a travesty that we are so low, but there is some hope in the fact that we are increasing, and the numbers are certainly moving in a positive direction.

Another very positive example that we've set as New Democrats is that our party right now is the highest in terms of representation that we've ever achieved; we're at over 50% representation, and that's phenomenal. That's a model that I think other parties can strive towards. I'm really honoured that we have that. I think it also provides us with a great way of showing to others that this is possible. This is a good example that we've

set, and I think it will encourage others down the road. It's something that I'm very honoured to be a part of.

Beyond to increasing representation in terms of gender or increasing representation of women, there are other areas that we need to address to make sure our politics are more representational or, more accurately, that we have representatives who represent our population more accurately. The other area is racialized people or visible minorities. That's an area that we are still struggling with as a province, as a country, and certainly in our municipalities it's a large problem.

Let's start with federal. There have been some significant improvements. Most recently, in this past election a great number of racialized candidates have been elected, and I think that's a great sign and a great achievement. In federal politics, we certainly have a long way to go. There's a lot more that needs to be done.

Provincially, we are also lacking. Ontario is one of the most diverse provinces in the country, probably one of the most diverse places in the world. Given that diversity, we don't see that as accurately reflected in our representation as we'd like to see. So it's something we need to work on. Again, this is something that the government—the strategy could be two-fold. There are existing associations and organizations that talk about how to increase representation by encouraging parties to adopt requirements around diversified candidates, making sure that there are racialized candidates, that marginalized members of the community are supported in terms of nominations and are able to become candidates.

There are organizations that we can support, that are non-governmental, that are doing the great work of, again, exposing various communities to politics, teaching various communities about avenues to get involved and encouraging them to get involved. I think the government has a great role in ensuring that the barriers that do exist are addressed. We can look at various strategies around that. I'll get to some of those strategies, because I think they talk about participation broadly and improving our electoral system broadly. I'll get to those a little later on. That's another area that we need to really work on.

If you look at this assembly, right now, in terms of the opposition side, I think I'm the only racialized individual in the entire opposition, both Conservatives and New Democrats combined. I think that's a telltale example of where we need to improve, the fact that that's the current state of affairs. On the government side, there has been some improvement, but it certainly still doesn't accurately reflect the proportion of racialized individuals in our province, so we need to certainly address that.

We've talked about the need for increasing representation when it comes to women and increasing representation when it comes to racialized people. We also need to look at increasing representation of young people. Young people are not represented in politics as much as they should be. I think the 2011 federal election provided an opportunity in Quebec, particularly, where there were a large number of young people that were elected. It was a very positive thing to have a mixed assembly that way, or

a mixed House of Commons, where you have people from all walks of life and people from all age groups, Mr. Speaker.

I think that's absolutely important. It's important because it provides a very vibrant form of democracy. When your representatives are diverse—when they are made up of a wide range of experiences, occupations and demographics—it creates a more vibrant representation, and it would support a vibrant debate, the introduction of new ideas, the ability to accurately bring forward the voices of people from all parts of our country or all parts of our communities. I think that's absolutely important. In Ontario, I think more can be done with encouraging young people to be involved in politics. I'll talk about apathy in terms of voting a little later on in my discussion, but I think that's an area that we really need to work on: How can we encourage more youth to be involved?

While this bill talks about electoral boundary reform, more accurately representing the population of Ontario, increasing the number of seats and making sure that people have their voices heard, when we're talking about representation and making sure that the populations are represented, it also starts opening up the door around involvement in these electoral processes, in voting and what we can do to ensure that more people participate. Mr. Speaker.

So the whole purpose of changing the boundaries is to make sure that our populations are represented. To ensure that our populations are represented, naturally what flows from that is that people need to vote. They need to get out and vote to make sure that they're being represented, that their voices are being heard. But if you look at previous provincial, federal and municipal voter turnout, it's dismal. In terms of the G7 or G8 nations, our voter turnout is far lower than in many other countries. It's something that is very troubling. We can't have a very vibrant democracy if people aren't turning up to vote. There are strategies around that; there have been discussions around ways of increasing that vote. Many of them have proven to provide results that work, but there are also some drawbacks. I'll discuss some of those options.

I spent some time in Australia last summer—or last winter; it was their summer. In Australia, they have a mandatory voting regime. On one side, a mandatory voting regime certainly has increased the voter turnout. They have some of the best voter turnout in the world. But the problem, again, around mandatory voting is the way that they implement that in Australia: There's a fine. Now, the fine will disproportionately impact people that are already marginalized. People who are lower income would be impacted more by that fine; people who are transient, who are homeless, people who don't have the resources. Those folks are going to be disproportionately impacted, so there are some issues around that way of promoting voting.

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If you look on the positive side, there is phenomenal voter turnout and more participation in democracy, and that's something that's excellent. So maybe not the

Australian model, but it's something to look at in terms of how we can ensure that we have more turnout.

One of the things I think we need to do, and it's something that is absolutely important, is making it easier to vote. While we're talking about making our electoral boundaries more reflective of our population, we also need to make sure that our elections are more accessible and our people have the ability to vote, that it's not a barrier. People want to, but say, "The timings are difficult" or "I can't get off of work" or "It's just too far to go." That should never be the reason. That should never be the reason why our voter turnout is so low: that people just simply can't get to the polling station in time. The idea that polling stations close before people arrive bothers me and troubles me, because the hallmark or the foundation of a democracy is the ability to vote. If there are any barriers in voting, it just seems to me that we need to do whatever we can to erase those barriers.

There have been various discussions around how we can increase voter turnout. One of the strategies that's been implemented recently was around increasing advance polls, the amount of days that we have advance polls. I think that was a great strategy; it worked, and more people showed up. But there are other things we can do to make sure voting is easier and more accessible. I think we need to make sure that we look at that and have a discussion around what we can do around that.

There have been various ideas floated. Some folks are saying, "In this time and age, why aren't we at the point where we can vote electronically?" Obviously, there are going to be a host of issues around that and paramount in that are concerns around security and ensuring the identity of the individual who votes. But I'm sure at this point we can come up with some strategies that are more effective and make sure that we are able to get more people out to vote.

The other thing we can do, and this is something that may seem counterintuitive—one is to actually make the voting process easier so that people can get out to the polling stations: making the hours longer, making more polling stations and longer advance voting days. But the other area that has made people less likely to be involved in politics is the overall concept of politics becoming cynical. People have become cynical about politics because of what's been going on. I think that's something we need to address. There has slowly been an erosion, and there has been a loss of trust and a loss of faith in politics. Even the idea of a politician being a profession or an occupation that sometimes receives a lot of jokes or is the brunt of a joke—I'm always up for a good joke, but the problem is that as politics and politicians lose their status in society or, more importantly, the public loses faith in this institution, it will result in, and it has resulted in, less people being involved or willing to vote.

What people say is, "What's the point of voting? Nothing's going to happen anyway." It's interesting, because if you look at the way our system is moving, one of the things that has happened is that we've seen, particularly with this government, that promises are made

and those promises are blatantly broken. When you break promises or when you over-promise and under-deliver, what happens is that the public then becomes cynical: "We've been promised all of these innovations, we've been promised all of these investments, and none of them came through. What's the point in voting?"

What's funny—or what's very ironic, probably not funny—is that the people who create that cynicism, the people who break their promises, the people who encourage people to not care about politics, are then re-elected because of that cynicism. Because fewer and fewer people are participating in politics, the status quo remains. Whoever is an incumbent or whoever is already in power remains in power because, by being cynical and not following through on commitments, you create a population that's cynical, and who then, in turn, have a lower voter turnout and who keep on electing the same people who created that cynicism in the first place. So it's kind of this vicious cycle. To break that cycle, we as legislators need to make sure that we follow through on our commitments. We need to ensure that people are not cynical about politicians or politics. We have a lot to do to restore that faith in politics. We have a lot that we can contribute to making sure that people don't lose their faith in the political system. If we increase that faith in this political system, in that belief or that trust that the system can work to the benefit of people, we'll see more voter turnout. I think that's something that we need to address. Things like the various scandals that this government has been a part of: Those scandals make people cynical, and when people are cynical, they don't come out to vote.

So while we're talking about electoral boundary reform, when we have a government that is consistently being investigated by the police for criminal allegations, it really impacts the ability of people to vote. If you look at the most recent allegation, the bribery allegation, an allegation of bribery by an affiliate of the political party that's representing our province will absolutely impact people in terms of their becoming more cynical and being less likely to vote. It is something we really need to work on. Right now in Sudbury this government is facing—now charges have been laid against an organizer for bribing an individual not to run in politics. What could be more cynical? That's exactly what people look to and say, "Why bother with politics? These guys are all up to corrupt activities, and they're not out to represent the interests of the public." They're feeding right into that, and that's exactly what people become cynical about. Whether it's the recent bribery scandal in Sudbury or whether it's the gas plants scandal—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, a point of order: I would like the member of the NDP to stick to the bill that is before us. I'm always very surprised to hear his comments. I'm not going to go any further, but I'd like him to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please. I appreciate the comments from the Attorney General.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Essex, come to order, please.

I have been listening very attentively to the points that the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton has been making, and in my opinion he is making points relative to the bill that is being discussed, and so I will encourage him to continue along, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's absolutely important that we look at what we can do to increase voter participation. The whole purpose of this bill is to make sure that we have accurate or proportional representation based on population and that our boundaries are more accurately reflecting the realities of the people of our province. The entire purpose of that is to make sure that we have a functioning democracy, a democracy that actually speaks to the people that it purports to represent.

One of the ways to make sure that happens is by making sure that the number of people are represented by an appropriate number of members. To make that happen, we need people to vote. That's tied in; that's integral. If we're not talking about voting, if we can't talk about voting when we're talking about electoral boundaries, there is really no point in talking about electoral boundaries. They are tied together. The electoral boundaries are in place because there is going to be an election, there is going to be voting. To make sure that people participate in elections, we have to make sure that people aren't cynical.

People are cynical about politics because of the actions, many of the actions, of this government: the government scandal when it comes to the gas plants, the way in which they weren't open, transparent and accountable about the decisions they made. They didn't deliver those reasons to the public. The response to the questions raised: People questioned the cost of this scandal, and the government came out with one estimate, then came up with another estimate and continually changed their answers, again and again. It's going to make people cynical. Then the Auditor General had to come in and provide a more accurate number, and then said, contrary to what the government had been saying before, that it's actually close to a billion dollars, the cost of the scandal.

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But decisions are made by governments, and sometimes projects have to be cancelled. What's even worse, to fuel the cynicism, is the manner in which the government tried to hide the facts by deleting e-mails, by deleting information. That's an even bigger scandal. The gas plants scandal is actually a twofold scandal: One is the actual—

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Actually, it was a cover-up of a cover-up.

One is the actual end of the gas plants, ending those gas plants. The second part of the scandal is the fact that there was information deleted. And the way that information was deleted, the way that the government hid information from the public and wasn't providing the information in an upfront—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I just care to remind the member that we are, in fact—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Finally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will take care of this, Attorney General, thank you very much.

I just want to remind the member that the bill at hand—I'm going to ask that you stay to the discussion with regard to the bill at hand and not wander into other issues that may be or may not be relevant at this point in time.

I'll allow you to continue, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sure, thank you.

In general, without perhaps getting into the details, the government needs to ensure that there is faith, belief or trust in the political system for people to want to vote, and to make sure that we have boundaries that accurately reflect them.

We talked about provincial; we talked about federal; now, we have to look at municipal as well. The government is looking at boundaries that would accurately represent the federal changes, with some exceptions in the north, which are appropriate. Maintaining the current boundaries that we have was a good decision, and I support that.

With respect to the other boundaries, boundaries that would overlap with our federal boundaries would ensure that we are able to work in coordination with our federal counterparts. It would make our jobs easier and, I think, more efficient, which is more important than it being easier, if we make our jobs more efficient.

The government also has a responsibility in this province to look at municipalities. In terms of the representational issues that I was talking about before, it's in the municipalities that we see some of the biggest problems around representation. We don't have enough women represented—absolutely. We don't have enough racialized people represented. In terms of demographics of age, we don't have enough diversity of age represented.

In our biggest city, which is probably the most diverse city certainly in Ontario, and in Canada as well, and probably amongst the most diverse cities in the world—for a city as diverse as Toronto, the fact that we don't have the diversity represented in the council is something that's a big problem. While this bill is going to change electoral boundaries for the province, it does raise the issue or the question around what we can do to make sure that we have better representation, not only by population, but also by other factors like race and gender, and what we can do to ensure that happens. There have been discussions around changes to the municipal voting regime. Some of those changes have been around looking

at ranked ballots. There have been discussions around looking at proportionality.

The ranked ballot system, particularly when it comes to municipalities, might be a way to ensure that we have better representation. There has been a lot of discussion around it. There have been some great activists who have done significant work on it, and what they have found is that where ranked ballots are implemented—or a ranked-ballot-like system—you find that there's a greater number of racialized individuals that are supported or voted in, you find that there's a greater number of women that are voted in, and it creates a more diverse result. That's absolutely important. That's one mechanism that has been raised. I think this government—now, when we're opening up the discussion around elections and electoral boundaries, this is a great opportunity for us to look at ways to improve not only our province's representation, but also that of our municipalities.

Another area that I talked about in terms of making—oh, I didn't talk about it yet, but I talked about race, gender and age in terms of making sure we have diversity. There is also the importance of making sure that our representation is proportional when it comes to the disabled community in our province. For folks with disabilities, folks who have different physical capabilities, there are significant barriers to their access to politics, and representation is not there. There is certainly a big gap when it comes to that representation, and that's another area where we need to ensure that there is accessibility, that there are ways of promoting folks who have various abilities and capabilities, to make sure that they're able to be represented in politics. We have to ensure that we take the right steps to make sure that happens, making sure that our cities are also given the tools to ensure that there is more diversity. What can we do around that? There needs to be discussion around that.

In terms of the boundaries, we've looked at different ways: whether the ward system is going to provide the best way to make sure we have diverse candidates coming forward, or another system that perhaps could encourage more people being voted in. The ranked ballot system is another idea that's come up, but there are other ways to ensure that they happen.

The government has a lot of resources at their disposal to ensure that we support initiatives that would increase voter turnout and that would also increase diversity. There have been a number of community members who have created initiatives around increasing votes. Last year I was able to attend a great conference that was put together by members of the African-Canadian community. The theme of the conference—which was the second annual conference of the African Canadian Summit—was #BlackVotesMatter. It's important to one particular community that has faced a lot of difficulties and has certainly faced great barriers in terms of being accurately represented and proportionally represented. So the theme of the summit was #BlackVotesMatter.

One of the initiatives that was talked about was ensuring that communities that historically have low voter

turnout were able to come out and vote. One of the strategies was to let people in those communities know about the election, let them know about the issues that were going on, and also to show that communities that vote are able to make sure their voices are heard and their concerns are addressed—making that connection.

The work at that summit and some of those organizations was phenomenal. They were demonstrating that their strategies were working. They were increasing participation, they were increasing civic engagement, and I think those are the types of organizations that need more support. I think the government can certainly provide that type of support and funding to groups that look at how we can increase the turnout and how we can increase participation.

If we turn back to some of the electoral boundary reforms, one of the things that I wanted to note is that there was a lot of work that went into these boundary discussions. I participated in some of these discussions, and I think it's important that we look at the process as well. To come up with these boundaries, one of the most important ways to do that is to speak to the people in those communities and make sure the boundaries are reflective of the realities on the ground. There were certainly some great points about it and there are certainly some things that we can improve moving forward.

Whenever we have the opportunity to redraw boundaries, there are a couple of factors that should be in mind. Some of those factors were implemented, but I think we can improve upon them. One of the things that we've noticed in this set of electoral boundary reforms, and a principle that was brought up in the consultation process, is that we want to make sure, as much as possible, that wherever possible, if a member can represent one municipality versus representing multiple municipalities, it's a more efficient, more effective way of representation. I know there are folks who have to represent multiple municipalities. My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin brags about representing probably upwards of 20 municipalities in his riding, with the geographical size of it. I can't compete with that. I understand that's very difficult and it's, I'm sure, very taxing on him, but he's more than capable.

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In my riding I was representing Brampton and Mississauga. There are others members I know in the Peel region who had to represent Brampton and Mississauga. We were faced with some difficulties, from things not as deep or not as politically relevant, but on a community-based level. Being able to attend two Canada Days was very difficult. If Brampton residents wanted to see their political representation there on a Canada Day event, and that Canada Day event was also being held in Mississauga, it created a lot of difficulties. Now that the changes have been implemented that would ensure each member represents one municipality each, either Brampton or Mississauga, I think that was a great change. That was done through a lot of consultation. That was a positive sign; that was something we all raised. We

thought it was important to make sure that our representatives, wherever possible, could represent one municipality only. It makes it easier in dealing with city councilors, dealing with the mayor of that region and the school board trustees.

An area, though, that could have been improved upon in terms of process was the discussion around the federal boundaries impacting the provincial boundaries and involving the provincial representatives. Because the discussion was around changes that initially were for the federal government, the focus was more so on federal representatives. I think that when we see that, historically, changes that happen federally will also happen provincially, we need to make sure that up front in the process it's very open that this is a process that very well might be adopted by the province and to ensure that there is provincial input right from the beginning, that there is a lens through which this decision is made that both provincial and federal representatives will be—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would just ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke if you could perhaps move over just a little bit. The reason for that is that I like to maintain eye contact with the speakers and you're right in the way. In fairness to him, he's not trying to dodge around you. Thank you for your indulgence and for obliging.

Back to the speaker from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much.

That's an important factor to consider. I note that it wasn't very clear initially and it wasn't presented with that analysis in mind, that whatever changes will be made federally will certainly be adopted provincially, so let's discuss it with both in mind right off the bat. I think that's something that we can improve upon in terms of the process moving forward.

Beyond the process itself, there is a certain independence we need to maintain around the process. These decisions might have impact on political parties, might have impact on which ridings are more favourable or not favourable, so we need to ensure that the process has this in place. This is something we need to turn our minds to, to ensure that these decisions around electoral boundaries reflect, first and foremost, the communities historically—which communities, how they live, how they work—and on-the-ground realities—which parts of the city, which parts of the riding naturally will be aligned geographically in terms of interactions and in terms of their concerns—so that the ridings accurately reflect the realities on the ground. These are some of the things that we need to ensure, and then to ensure the process remains independent. This process was independent and we need to make sure that it remains so, that it's not something that is political in nature, that it's just factual and evidence-based in nature.

On that issue of evidence-based decision-making, one of the concerns that we had when we were in this process was that we didn't have the data to raise some of the concerns that were coming up about what are the realities of this particular riding. Other ridings I'm sure face the

same issue. When you don't have data about the demographics, about the languages spoken, about the details of the residents, it makes it difficult to make these types of decisions. So I think we really need to look at what we can do to increase our access to some data. With the census now being significantly reduced, we need to look at other ways of making sure we have that accurate data so that people can make decisions around the riding and the riding profile so that electoral boundaries reflect the actual realities on the ground. That's something we need to discuss or consider: what we can do to obtain the accurate data to make those decisions in moving forward. That's an area of concern.

Overall, the increase in representation in this House is a positive thing. Having more members will certainly bring more voices and more debate to the Legislature and to the assembly. But one of the areas that I'm concerned about is that while the boundaries have been changed, during the process we raised certain concerns around how, within a couple of years, there's going to be a significant influx of new residents, particularly in our riding. The way the process was designed was that they could not take into consideration population growth. They were only allowed to consider population as it stood at the moment of the consultation.

I know members for Brampton will talk about this as well: The problem is that in Brampton, particularly east of the 410—which would involve my riding as well as Brampton–Springdale, which will now become Brampton North, as well as Brampton Centre, which is part of my riding, Bramalea–Gore–Malton—there's going to be a significant influx. Estimates are that around 50,000 people are to come into those areas. Some projections are even higher than that. So while the boundaries are now set and are close to the provincial averages, with this influx of new residents, the population will already well exceed that provincial average, and it has only been a year since these changes have been made. By the next election, in my riding, I know I'm going to well exceed the provincial average again because of the influx of new residents.

During the process, we raised these concerns, saying that based on the population growth, we're actually going to be beyond that boundary again. But in fairness to the individuals who were involved in the process, they said, "Our hands are tied. Based on the way the process has been laid out, we can't actually accommodate for population growth." Perhaps we need to look at a more robust or more flexible system for electoral boundary changes when there's going to be, in the next couple of years, again, a need for boundary reform.

We need to look at what we can do to ensure that we are constantly updating our boundaries in a way that ensures that each member is representing the appropriate number of constituents and residents and, more importantly, that the residents of each community have their voice heard in Parliament, that they have a voice in terms of their population being represented accurately in Parliament. That's something we have to look at.

While the boundaries, as they're currently drawn—I think it's important to note that this is a good step forward and something that's necessary. The federal government moved on this, and naturally we needed to address this issue as well, so I'm happy to see the government doing this. This is not a controversial issue, so this is something, certainly, we support and will be supporting once it comes to the vote.

The government has moved quite quickly on this issue, so I think it's important to give praise where praise is due. The government has moved in an efficient and timely manner with respect to the electoral boundary bill, Bill 115, bringing it forward in a timely manner. We're discussing this bill right after a federal election; it's very timely. That was an appropriate thing to do.

The changes, again, are appropriate. The increase in the number of members was the right thing to do, as well as ensuring that the boundaries reflect the communities and reflect the realities.

On a moving-forward basis, though the process itself and the mechanism by which we actually come to these boundaries is a federal matter and we're adopting that federal matter, we might want to look at what we can do to amend our legislation so that we have our own, perhaps, independent assessment as well so that we can look at those boundaries from a provincial perspective. One way is to look at it at the same time, which I indicated earlier, but there might be some benefit in having, perhaps, a parallel analysis of the ridings so that we can compare and contrast our notes of the federal Legislature and the framework around coming up with these boundaries and having a provincial framework around it as well.

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We have seen that, for the most part, we do adopt the federal boundaries, with the exception of the north. I think there may be times, moving forward, that there might be additional exceptions that are required and may be necessary. So it's important that we have an independent perspective. I think it also speaks to the federalist nature of our country that the provinces are entitled to a strong say in terms of their own sovereignty and their own decision-making process. So I think it is an important fact that should be protected and should be considered by this Legislature.

In my last 10 minutes, I'm going to just wrap up with a summary of what I'm proposing that we do. One is that while the boundaries are going to better represent our population, now that we're talking about better representation of population, we need to also look at better representation based on factors beyond just population. I want to reiterate, first and foremost, one of the major areas of representation that doesn't exist, and that this bill, obviously, doesn't address: representation by women in our assemblies. It's absolutely important that this government take the necessary steps to increase that participation and increase that representation. While I'm talking about it on a political level, I think it's also important to note that this is something that's a problem

in all areas and all spheres of influence. We need to do more to ensure that women are represented more proportionately in all areas of power.

The government has taken some steps. There have been some steps around board membership being more diverse, including more women and more racialized individuals. That's an important step. I think that those recommendations could be stronger. We could ensure that there is greater representation in all spheres of influence, whether it's our school boards, whether it's our boards of directors for corporations or for nonprofits. This is an area that we need to address. Whether it's on the political or on the bureaucratic side, I think we need to make sure that we have that representation.

Of the two steps that I have suggested, one is supporting existing organizations that are increasing that representation, implementing programs and supporting programs that would actually encourage representation and encourage participation. I think that's essential. Providing the funding where necessary to support those types of organizations is also important. Then the government itself can take steps to make sure that those barriers that do exist are torn down and that there is accessibility, that there are ways of promoting and encouraging on a government side—on a legislative side—that participation.

With respect to diversity of candidates for a better representation of racialized individuals, that's an area where we've not done enough work. We need to see a greater role of the government in encouraging and supporting these initiatives. There are various groups that are encouraging it. The government needs to support those groups that are independent. The government needs to do more on its own part to expand strategies around encouraging more racialized people.

Back on women, I forgot to mention, with respect to the wall in the Legislature, that it is only one wall and it's in one corner of the building. I think there needs to be more, so that when you walk into the Legislative Assembly, it more accurately reflects our population, keeping in mind the importance of tracking and honoring tradition and history. There needs to be more, though, so that when you walk into the building, in all parts of the building, there are as many people of this province represented in the halls, through the imagery, through the pictures—while that one wall that commemorates women in politics and women in the assembly is a good step, it's still not enough. I think it's just too localized to one part of the building. So that needs to be improved.

With respect to youth, I had indicated we need to do more to encourage that. There's one program that I think is quite effective: when we invite youth to come and participate in mock debates here in the Parliament. I have been present for some of those debates, and I think it is a phenomenal strategy. You have young people that sit in these chairs. You have a Speaker that's elected from them. They get to experience what it's like to be here. I think that has a phenomenal impact on young people, and it certainly exposes many people to the idea of being

involved in politics. I think it's a great strategy, and I think there could be an expansion of that.

This House should be used more often by the people that we serve, that we represent, and particularly the young people. I think it's so inspiring when you see young people sit here, and they stand up, being referred to as members. When you see their faces light up, you can tell that this is having a big impact. Simply just being in this chamber—there's a certain inspirational element to the way that this building looks and this chamber looks. I think it's important to make sure it's open and accessible.

In my experience as a lawyer, we often used the courts for mock trials. Those students who were able to engage in those mock trials went on to feel more encouraged and more excited about becoming involved in the legal system, and many of them went on to apply to law school. Similarly, making sure this building is more accessible and open to the youth will encourage more participation.

Finally, I talked about the importance of voting in general. These electoral boundaries are only as relevant as the people who come out to vote. If we change our boundaries and we make them more representative of the population, but people aren't coming out to vote, then we're not doing our job. We're only doing half the job. Half the job is making sure the boundaries are accurate, but we need to do the second part of the job, which is to make sure people come out and vote. What we can do around voting, the strategy we can do to encourage more people to vote, what we can do around making sure it's easier to vote, that there are no barriers, that people aren't not voting because it was just impossible to, or it was too hard, or they simply couldn't find the time—we need to make sure that isn't an issue and that we do a lot of work around that.

I can still think of an example in this past election when there were a number of folks who were challenged in terms of mobility. They didn't know there were processes available to make sure they could vote remotely; they could vote by mail. They weren't aware of those mechanisms. I think we need to do more to make sure people know about that. They came a week before the election, or a couple of days before the election, saying, "Hey, listen, we have some folks in our house who want to vote but aren't able to get to the polling station." The fact that they didn't know there were ways to do it but that they needed to come earlier is something that is troubling. As a government, we should have made sure that people were aware that they can vote by mail or other ways when they are not able to actually physically come to the polling station. We can do more around that, to make sure more people vote.

I touched on this briefly, and I won't get into detail, but in general, as a broad concept, we as legislators can do a lot more to ensure that we re-instill belief and trust in the political process, so that people are more likely to vote. We need to ensure that the government doesn't engage in cynical activities, or activities that create cynicism in our public, because that will reduce voter

turnout. That again is going to contravene the whole purpose of Bill 115.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the time. It was a pleasure to share my thoughts and concerns around this bill. I'm certain that we will support this bill. I think it's an important change, and we're in support of it. But it raises a broader discussion around things we can do to strengthen our democracy at a fundamental level.

The hallmark of our system is our democracy. Whatever we can do to strengthen this democracy, to instill more trust in it, will just make for a brighter future for us in this province and in the entire country.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 115.

As we all know, this is a very important piece of legislation. The overall intent of this legislation is to strengthen democracy and offer fair representation to Ontarians, no matter where they live in the province of Ontario. They may be living in the northern region, southern region, eastern region or western region, or in the urban ridings or the rural ridings.

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The intent is also to increase the number of electoral districts to 122 in the province of Ontario. I believe that if this bill is passed, this will definitely provide a fair representation to all Ontarians in the Ontario Legislature by the 2018 election.

As we know, parts of southern Ontario are growing quickly. Peel region, where my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South is found, is expected to grow by 600,000 people in decades to come. Ridings in fast-growing areas are very diverse, with many ethnic and cultural communities and with varied socio-economic features.

My colleagues would agree that those areas are very vibrant and active places, with many people who need and deserve fair representation in the government. That is why I'm pleased to find that Bill 115 will add 15 new ridings in southern Ontario. This reflects the principle of representation by population.

It's a fair bill and it promotes democracy. I will support this bill and I urge all members to support it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hope it's not the only time I get to speak to this bill. I want to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; he talked about a lot of things in his address here this morning, not all of them about the act, but he wanted to cover a lot of things with regard to electoral reform. I'm going to speak just about the act.

I hope I get the chance, when I say "the act"—I hope I'm getting the act and not the axe. I'm afraid, with what has been going on in this House with regard to time allocation, that we're going to hit 6.5 hours—we've already hit it—and once these questions and comments are done, I'm afraid that the ruling from the Liberal politburo is going to be, "Shut 'er down."

My riding is not affected by this because of some of its geographical realities. I'm bordered by the province of Quebec and the Ottawa River on one side; I'm bordered by the city of Ottawa on one side; and on another side I go into Algonquin Park. It's almost impossible to do something with the boundaries of my riding without going into some other riding that is not subject to the same kind of reform as well.

I do understand the need for electoral reform as our boundaries change. When the population of a province grows, and in a greater way in some areas of the province than others—in fact, some might even shrink at times—it requires to rejig the boundaries from time to time. The federal government made those changes federally, and for the most part we believe the right thing to do is for our boundaries to mirror the federal boundaries.

I am one of the fortunate ones in that I don't have to get ready to campaign in a riding that isn't mine today. My riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, as I said, is unchanged, so I have the luxury of only having to deal with the same electorate in 2018 that I dealt with in 2014 and whom I deal with on a daily basis as a constituency representative.

I hope I get the chance to speak to this again and that the guillotine doesn't fall on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the constituents of London—Fanshawe, whom I am honoured to represent.

The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton always brings education to bills when he talks about the bills that we debate in this House. One thing he mentioned and pointed out was about more representation of women, and I couldn't agree with him more. More representation for women in politics is really important. We represent 50% of the population.

One nice thing about the New Democrats is that we have 11 women out of 20 in our caucus, so we are meeting that quota, so to speak. We're fulfilling those obligations that we talk about, having more women in politics.

I was reading the Toronto Star yesterday—I actually picked up the paper itself, not online—and there was an article in there about how aboriginal communities organized in this election. They started organizing months before the election happened. They were organizing because, of course, they wanted a change in government, and it was really important that they got their voices heard. There were a lot of issues that were important to the aboriginal community, one of them being missing aboriginal women.

One of the things they pointed out was that the polling stations—four polling stations, I think it was—were so busy that they actually ran out of ballots. That was very encouraging to see, that people are more engaged, especially in this federal election. I think that because of the contentious issue, they wanted the government to be changed. It's too bad they weren't voting for something

they wanted, instead of strategically voting for something they didn't want. That's something we've got to change, too. Strategic voting has no place in democracy. People need to vote for things they actually believe in and want to see changed, as opposed to voting for things they don't want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise to speak in reference to Bill 115, the Electoral Boundaries Act. I certainly compliment the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, who spoke on election boundaries.

The major criteria here, of course, is Ontario's provincial boundaries in light of our population growth. There was some dynamic growth throughout the province, and we want to ensure that Ontarians are represented equally and fairly, respectively. That means adding 15 new ridings, as some of our members have mentioned. However, we definitely want to maintain the existing 11 provincial ridings in northern Ontario, where there's a distinct advantage provincially, so there is more representation for provincial seats here in the Legislature as compared to federally.

I know that sometimes when we're talking about items, we tend to wander off a little bit. Sometimes you might want to talk about a gas item or a plant. That occurs, and generally the Speaker—as you have done, sir—just brings them right back in line. I always believe if you address an issue, you should speak to both sides of it. I think when you talk about something like that, you should really remember that all three parties favour it and say that publicly. You should also acknowledge the fact that the municipalities in question spoke very positively about it, and they were the proponents of it.

When it comes to, increasingly, women's issues and the women's population, I agree with all those things that you were saying, and I congratulate you. But I do tell you that in Ajax, four of the seven members of city council are women, and I tell you, it's a great council. They do it quite well, and the women are at the forefront of council as to some of the changes you mentioned.

I think that because my time is running out and everyone is anxious for a breather, Mr. Speaker, I'll just sit down for a moment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton for his final comments.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to all the members who joined in the debate, and thank you for your questions and comments. I appreciate them all.

This is an important time just to sort of highlight that at the heart of this bill is the idea and principle around strengthening our democracy. Whatever we can do to ensure that we strengthen democracy is obviously absolutely important. The hallmark of our society is our ability to have a free and democratic society, and one of those most important components is around our elections and our voting.

Again, whatever we can do to ensure our population is accurately represented is fundamental for us as legislators. The increase in membership, based on the increased growth in population in our province, is absolutely important. We support the changes that are being suggested in this bill, and the boundaries that will reflect the federal, with the exception of the seats to the north.

I think it's also important to note that while we have faced certain difficulties in this province economically, our population growth is a great sign of hope that there is great potential in this province and that we can do a lot of phenomenal things. We need to tap into that population growth and make sure that each member is able to contribute in a meaningful way. We can do a lot to ensure that happens.

When it comes to our democracy, though, we need to make sure that our populations are represented, not only by making sure that there is accurate representation for a population but also in other demographics.

I thank all the members who have shared the concerns that I raised today. Other members, obviously, have raised this many times before. I look forward to working on not only electoral boundary reform but electoral reform, broadly speaking, so that we can encourage broader representation in all demographics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank all members engaged in debate this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since we are within our timelines, this House will stand recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to welcome the Co-op Housing Federation to Queen's Park. I know that others will be introducing more representatives, but I wanted to recognize that in the west members' gallery, we have Sophie Taylor from Peel-Halton Co-op Housing Federation; Judith Collins, Co-op Housing Federation of Toronto; Donna Stewart, Nelson Co-operative Homes; and Aaron Denhartog from the Co-op Housing Federation. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park, and I hope all members will attend their event tonight at 5 p.m. in room 228.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to introduce Lynette Sims and Karen Scott from the MS Society, as well as Paul Raymond and Suzanne Nurse from Epilepsy Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm delighted to welcome to Queen's Park today the page captain, Michael Douglas; his parent, Jayne Douglas; his grandparents, Carol and Bruce Douglas; and his grandmother, Elizabeth Stuart. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to recognize the MOM March that's here today: Mothers and Others March Against Eating Disorders. It's sponsored by the National

Institute of Eating Disorders. I'd like to introduce Lynne Koss, Sandy Provost and Arielle Mayer. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome some of the co-op housing representatives here today: Brian Eng, the director of CHF Canada; Simone Swail, program manager, government relations, CHF Canada, Ontario region; Denise McGahan, program manager, member services, CHF Canada, southwestern Ontario; and Emily de Keyser, manager for the Bridletowne Circle Housing Co-op. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to welcome Wendy and Len Preskow, Marlene Sachs and Alex Franceschini from the National Initiative for Eating Disorders. They do an amazing job raising awareness and in education. I hope everyone attends their event outside the Legislature after question period.

I'd also like to introduce two members of the Epilepsy Ontario association who are here from Durham region today. Please join me in welcoming executive director Dianne McKenzie, and Chelsea Kerstens. They're sitting in the east lobby.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Alice Funke from Pundit's Guide as my guest in the members' gallery today.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome Epilepsy Ontario to Queen's Park this morning. Executive director Paul Raymond and representatives from community epilepsy agencies across Ontario are here for their annual Epilepsy Action Day and will be holding a reception later this evening. Please welcome them.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce David Hwang, who is a community leader in the Korean community. Welcome.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce the MS Society of Canada, here today with us in the gallery. I invite all members of the House to room 230 for their reception right after question period.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'd like to introduce my OLIP intern, Eric Zinn, who is sitting with us in the members' gallery today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'd like to introduce and welcome Roger Clowater from my riding and his police foundations class from the National Academy of Business and Health. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Today is Epilepsy Action Day. I would like to introduce Dianne McKenzie, executive director, and Chelsea Kerstens, Epilepsy Durham region. Welcome to Queen's Park today for Epilepsy Action Day.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm not sure if I heard this person being introduced yet in the House, but I did want to welcome Harvey Cooper, managing director at the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Welcome, Harvey.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington on a point of order.

Mr. Randy Hillier: On a point of order; thank you, Speaker. In yesterday's question period, there were some erroneous statements made, and I'd like to make sure that the Attorney General has an opportunity to correct her record today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order. The member also knows only members themselves can correct their own record.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a good indicator of how we're going to start.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the associate minister.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear commemorative ribbons in recognition of epilepsy awareness day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear ribbons for epilepsy awareness day. Do we agree? Agreed.

I'm assured that all sides have appropriate ribbons in each of their galleries.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: To the Acting Premier: A National Post columnist wrote about the Liberals' secret \$2.5-million payout to unions. He described it with a word that, he said, "infers a blatant disregard for honesty, ethics or principle." He went on to say that the Liberals "did ... their best to hide the transaction, suggesting that, at some level, they still sense it's offensive, wrong and abusive of the public trust."

Will the Acting Premier explain why her leader tried so hard to keep these payments secret? What was she trying to hide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak to this issue. The member opposite is talking about a process that has been successful. Kids are in the classrooms; kids have stayed in the classrooms—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm willing to go down the same road I did yesterday. I would also encourage no members to use whistling as a way to make pronouncements.

Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The reality is that students have stayed in the classroom throughout this very difficult negotiation. The agreements that we have reached have been within the net-zero framework, which is an extraordinary accomplishment for our labour and our

public school boards, and our government. This has been a successful process. I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: There is a disturbing pattern emerging here. Liberals thought they were having a secret conversation with Andrew Olivier when they allegedly offered him a bribe, and then they got caught. When the private conversation became public, a top Liberal fundraiser was charged with corruption. The Liberals thought their payments to unions were secret; now that secret is out. This government must stop insulting the intelligence of Ontarians.

When will the Acting Premier admit that her government took classroom dollars and used them to buy union support?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will caution the member on the language. It's not there, but it's close, so I'll just caution him to refrain from making accusations.

Supplementary, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry—answer.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's important for the member opposite to understand that this was done without any cuts to the classroom. We have protected our success in our education system. This new process did require additional resources. We have fundamentally changed how negotiations between—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The new process did require additional resources. We did provide resources to our educational partners. The result is that we've been at the table and we've kept our kids in the classroom. This is all about making sure that kids are where they should be, and that is in the classroom. We've had success, Speaker. We look forward to more success, but having this relationship that has kept our kids in the class—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

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Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: That getting caught on this payment is a definition of success is bewildering. The government's latest scandal is laid out dollar for dollar in today's *Globe and Mail*. This government didn't need receipts because they weren't covering negotiating costs; they were covering advertising costs.

Now we know why, in 2013 and again this month, the Liberal government voted down the PC Party's bill to restrict third-party election advertising: because they wanted to make sure those millions of dollars that are being taken from the classroom are being used to benefit the Liberal Party.

Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, just for a moment, please. It's very difficult to ask one side to get quiet for the other side, when the other side is

engaging. If everyone were to just listen to the question and the answer, we would be better off.

Please continue.

Mr. Patrick Brown: To be very direct: When will this government apologize to parents and students for these secret payments that they know, that everyone in Ontario knows, are blatantly wrong?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the minister has said that—because we've had the new process in place now; we're through that transition phase—these payments will not continue in the future. They will not happen again.

What I can tell you is that it's pretty ironic that the party opposite is finally talking about education. Just remember, anyone who remembers back to the days when they were in office, where teachers were vilified, where kids were dropping out at alarming rates, where kids were not meeting international standards: Our children in our schools are doing so much better now than when you were in charge of the education system—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're proud of our record. Our graduation rates are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Two comments: First of all, I'd like to hear. Second of all, to the Chair, please.

One wrap-up sentence.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our children are doing so much better now, so much that people come from around the world to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: I struggle to understand how taking money from the classroom for union payments benefits the classroom. When the gas plant scandal broke, the government said it was only \$40 million. When these secret documents became public, that number exploded to a billion dollars. When this latest scandal broke last week, a million dollars became \$2.5 million on Friday, and now it's grown to over \$7 million. That's \$7 million that the Liberal Party used from taxpayers that has been taken from classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Acting Premier tell Ontario that there is no money to keep schools open, when they've used \$7 million from classrooms to promote their own political agenda?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The cost of this successful negotiation with the unions was offset by savings within the net-zero contract, so for you to say that this is coming out of the classroom is simply wrong.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member for Leeds-Grenville, come to order. And I heard somebody over here, but I'll zero in on you.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If you want to compare their record to our record when it comes to education: When we were elected in 2003, only 68% of kids were graduating high school in five years. Today, it's 84%. We've gone from a 68% graduation rate to an 84% graduation rate. You can snicker about that if you want, but that is life-changing for those kids.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the Chair, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When we were elected, Speaker, only 54% of kids were achieving the provincial standard in grades 3 and 6; now, it's 72%. Let's just think about that: From 54% to 72% of kids are meeting the standards—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's like making the 100-yard dash 50 yards. You lowered the standards. That's bull—

Interjection: I know you're full of it.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm full of it? What did you say?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew: second time.

Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: No matter how you spin it, this money is being taken from the classroom. These union payments are from the classroom.

What is the most shocking is that ETFO said they had never even asked for the money. The unions weren't expecting this payment. But the Premier has said this is business as usual in Liberal Ontario.

What's not business as usual is for this government to get caught red-handed. What's not business as usual is for this government to have to explain to parents why they took money out of the classroom and used it for election advertising.

When will this government apologize to the people of Ontario for funnelling classroom dollars for their own political purposes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is an absolutely absurd accusation. Let's go back to the data. How are kids doing in Ontario now compared to how they were doing when you were in charge of our education system?

Let me repeat: The high school graduation rate has gone from 68% to 84%—an extraordinary accomplishment. On test scores, 72% of students now are meeting the provincial standard in grades 3 and 6 combined, up 18 percentage points from the 54% who were achieving that when you were in charge of the education system.

We have increased our expenditures. Kids across this province now have full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds. We've invested in kids—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Dufferin–Caledon: second time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —while you've been saying we're spending too much money. I'll tell you, there's no better investment we will ever make than investing in the success of our kids, and you should recognize that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: It's getting pretty weak when you're stretching back into the past. You've run out of people to blame. You're stretching back into the past, when I was in high school. It's almost shameful.

The public is outraged that education dollars are being abused. Teachers are paying out of their own pockets for classroom supplies. Right now, parents are fundraising for school trips. They're being told the cupboard is bare. It's bare, but you know what's happening? It's bare, and you're taking money from the classroom—\$7 million.

My question for the Acting Premier is, how can this Ontario Liberal government think it's appropriate for even one second to take \$7 million out of the classroom to advance their own private political agenda?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Once again, these funds do not come out of the classroom.

I just want you to think about one thing. Now, I know you were not a candidate in the last provincial election, but ask any of your caucus mates about your promise to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm prepared to continue standing and taking your time from you if you decide to continue to shout people down.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Every single one of your caucus mates ran on the promise of firing 100,000 people. Just imagine what that would have done to the education system. Now, it's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, to the Chair. That's the specific reason why we do speak to the Chair.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I see the party opposite pretending they didn't make that promise, but they made that promise. In fact, the member from Barrie stood beside the then Leader of the Opposition when he made that promise to fire 100,000 people.

How would that have affected our education system? What would that have done to the educational assistants, the teachers, the students in our classrooms? It was an irresponsible promise to make, but everybody—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier has been using a lack of federal partner and federal money as one of the justifications for selling off Hydro One. The incoming federal government has promised billions of dollars for Ontario infrastructure, much more than the Premier could hope to make from selling Ontario's most important public asset, Speaker. The Premier will be meeting with the Prime Minister designate this afternoon. Will the sell-off of Hydro One be on the Premier's agenda?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: We were very clear in our election campaign that we did run on a plan to invest in infrastructure, in badly needed infrastructure. We did have a federal government for the past decade that was not prepared to partner with us. We are delighted that we do have a new government in Ottawa and that that government is making investing in infrastructure a priority.

But we have no plans to press pause the way the leader of the third party would like us to do. We have a significant infrastructure deficit. We must make those investments for our prosperity and for our quality of life. We are committed to investing \$130 billion over the next 10 years in infrastructure because that's what the people of this province need, and we will do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's not just what I want the Liberals to do in this situation. It's what the people of Ontario want the Liberals to do in this situation. With the federal government promising billions and billions of dollars in new spending for infrastructure in Ontario, the Premier could actually do what many, many Ontarians have been asking her to do: Slow down the sell-off and ask the federal government for enough funds so that she doesn't have to sell off Hydro One at all. Now, will the Premier be raising with the Prime Minister designate the urgent need for Canada's largest province to receive enough infrastructure money so that she can actually do the right thing by the people of this province and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we remain absolutely committed to our mandate, which is to invest in the infrastructure in this province. It's the right thing to do for our economy and it's the right thing to do for the people who live in this province. I would say that the leader of the third party, who would be talking to the same municipal leaders we talk to, has heard loud and clear from municipalities that those investments in infrastructure are badly needed. So this is about creating jobs. It's about economic growth in the short run and in the long term.

But we did have a problem with the previous government and we made no secret of that problem we had. We are delighted to have a Prime Minister and a government that will make investments in infrastructure, but we are not going to slow down on our commitment to build the infrastructure in this province that people need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families, businesses and over 174 municipalities have all told the Premier to stand up and do the right thing for them. Ontarians have been unequivocal: Stop the sell-off of Hydro One. Federal infrastructure money could easily let the Premier off the hook for this bad and unnecessary sell-off. The Premier has a chance to actually rise above her stubbornness and do the right thing: stand up for Ontarians and not sell off Hydro One. This afternoon, will the Premier be actually thinking about the people of Ontario and what they want and ask the Prime Minister designate of this country to provide sufficient funds so that the sell-off of Hydro One does not have to happen here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said, we welcome the new federal government's commitment to building infrastructure. That is a very important issue that they dealt with in the last campaign. The people of this province and this country gave a new government a mandate to invest in infrastructure. We look forward to the partnership that we now will have as we make investment decisions on very important infrastructure across this province.

So we are going to carry on. We are not going to slow down. We will not press the pause button. I know the leader of the third party likes to think that there are cheap and easy solutions to every problem. We remain committed to making the investments necessary. It will create jobs now and in the future. It will get people home to their families more quickly. It will allow trucks to transport materials. This is the right thing to do. We have a lot of catching up to do. We're at 10 years of no investment from the federal government. We're moving forward.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier, Speaker. The sell-off of Hydro One has always been a bad deal for Ontarians. Media reports indicate that the sell-off of Hydro One may bring in \$2 billion less than the government had originally estimated. That means that the one-time sell-off could bring in significantly less than the \$400 million, on average per year over the next 10 years, that the Premier was counting on. That's not very much money when you consider that Hydro One is a money-making asset that raises significant revenues for this province annually.

Can the Acting Premier tell the people of Ontario how much revenue the Liberals stand to lose from the privatizing of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the leader of the third party will be very happy to know that we are on track to generating the \$9 billion through the IPO. That's important because that money must be spent on the infrastructure that this province needs. So we do remain on track.

We're determined to get the best possible value for our assets so we can invest billions of dollars in infrastructure through the Trillium Trust. We are getting the best value. We're proceeding in a careful, staged manner with multiple tranches that will allow us to stay on track and achieve our target. This is the first step in a process. The final share price has not been established but we are, as I say, on track to receive the \$9 billion in proceeds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The people of Ontario actually stand to lose as much as \$300 million in cash dividends from the sell-off of Hydro One, plus another \$50 million in lost tax revenue each and every year, from now to eternity. If the one-time sell-off comes up \$2 billion short, as it appears that it will, this Premier is giving away Ontario's most important asset for pretty much nothing.

The Premier could choose better options and additional revenues to fund infrastructure because she could be asking the Prime Minister designate to pitch in the way he has already said that he was going to do.

My question is, why exactly is it that the Liberal government is giving away a cherished, profitable asset instead of finding better ways to fund the necessary infrastructure for our province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are going to continue to own the company after we're done this.

I have to say, it's astonishing for me to hear the leader of the third party call \$9 billion almost nothing; \$9 billion builds a lot of infrastructure. We are committed to investing in infrastructure.

I also want to remind the leader of the third party that there is a cost, a very significant cost, to not investing in infrastructure. Anyone who travels around this province knows there is a real cost to not investing. We are on track. We're benefiting from a \$2.2-billion deferred tax asset, a special dividend of \$1 billion. We are on track and we're going to proceed with this plan. We know the leader of third party doesn't like this idea—

Mr. Paul Miller: We don't want to hear 407 out of you guys any more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek.

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How this Deputy Premier can get up in her place and suggest to the people of Ontario that this government is getting \$9 billion to fund infrastructure is absolutely irresponsible. It is irresponsible.

We all know in this chamber that the Premier actually does have better options than selling off Hydro One. At every turn, this Liberal Premier has parroted Mike Harris's strategy of wrong-headed privatization, and Ontarians will once again pay the price. This strategy has already quadrupled electricity rates in Ontario for businesses and families.

The Premier will not even consider asking the most profitable corporations in Ontario to pay a little bit more for the infrastructure needs. The government could raise

corporate taxes. They could go to the actual Prime Minister designate and ask him to pitch in. Why is she choosing to take the Mike Harris approach?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to be clear, as I said earlier, we are still on track to receive \$9 billion in proceeds from our broadening the ownership of Hydro One. Five billion dollars will pay down the debt; \$4 billion will go into infrastructure. Our infrastructure plan is significant; it is important; it is valuable.

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I know, as I've said, that the member opposite doesn't want to proceed with this building of infrastructure, but we're going to proceed anyway. We have learned from Mike Harris what not to do. We carefully examined the 407 sale—talk about a fire sale; talk about giving away an asset for far less than it was worth. We analysed that deal, and we learned from those mistakes. We have a completely different structure.

The leader of the third party should understand that what we are doing is broadening the ownership, but we will still maintain—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Treasury Board president, also the Acting Premier. She's also the minister of poverty reduction.

Since yesterday, the tally of union payouts has increased from \$2.5 million. It has tripled to \$7 million. This is all unreceipted. It flies in the face of everything she tells this assembly when she's wearing her Treasury Board hat. Yet, in Ontario schools, breakfast programs are being cancelled. This morning I learned that in my own constituency the Osgoode Emergency Food Cupboard, which serves rural students and families, is bare.

This is the consequence of your so-called net zero. Seven million dollars would have gone a long way for those needy children across the province.

If she's not prepared to rein in the education minister for ignoring Treasury Board targets to eliminate the deficit, and if she's not prepared to rein in the education minister in order to meet the accountability laws she has put in place, I would ask that the President of the Treasury Board stand in her place and tell the Minister of Education to get that money back into the education system, away from the unions.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Before I turn to the Deputy Premier, I'm going to remind all members that when you speak to the Chair, it helps. That's the convention. I'm going to insist we do that. Speak in the third person to the Chair, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to sort out the facts here, Speaker. We agreed to a deal which is net zero with respect to compensation. We have always said that when

we concluded negotiations at all the tables, we would be quite willing to discuss the details of those agreements. In fact, the \$2.5 million that was transferred to the unions was part of three of those different net-zero agreements. We have always said that we would discuss those. There's no secret; it's part of those agreements which we were committed to doing.

The \$2.5 million which was transferred to the unions to support the cost of collective bargaining has always been part of the net-zero calculation. When negotiations are complete, we're quite happy to explain that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The squawking by the government has to stop. Okay?

We've got \$7 million in unreceipted payouts to unions who spent \$6.5 million in attack adds against the Progressive Conservative Party in the last election.

If that doesn't embarrass the government, and not meeting their deficit reduction targets doesn't embarrass the government, if not following their own accountability—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Thank you.

It goes for both sides.

Please finish.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A million dollars will get 4,000 needy students a breakfast program for one week. That is what the consequence is of your net zero. The union payouts are a misappropriation of tax dollars, plain and simple.

As Vice-Chair of the public accounts committee, I'm going to table a motion tomorrow asking for the Auditor General to investigate the \$7 million in misappropriated taxpayer dollars.

I'm going to ask the President of the Treasury Board too, not only to support that motion, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I can simply repeat that I'm not sure whether or not she has an understanding of "net zero." Net zero means that, in fact, the agreement didn't cost the government anything. The \$2.5 million in question is part of the net-zero calculation.

I have to dispense with this entire notion that anywhere in the collective agreements that we have negotiated—there are no cuts to the classrooms. The number of teachers that are being hired is the same based on class-size ratio; the number of teachers who were hired, based on additional teachers, are still in place and are still funded. There are no cuts to the classroom.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is for the Acting Premier. This government's record on education is

appalling. Not too long ago, the Acting Premier said there is no greater investment than the success of our kids. Well, Speaker, in the Acting Premier's own community of London, early childhood educators, maintenance staff, librarians and custodians have all received pink slips because of this government's proud record of cutting funding. To make matters worse, the Minister of Education is now uttering threats at education workers because she couldn't do her job.

Our kids are paying the price for this minister's failure. It's time for her to go. Will the Acting Premier admit that her Minister of Education has failed our kids and can't get the job done?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, we've increased spending in education by \$8.1 billion. You call that a cut; I call that an increase of 56%, and we're getting good value for that money. Our kids are doing so much better in school now than they were when we took office back in 2003.

We've got higher graduation rates, significantly. Tens of thousands of kids have graduated under our watch who would have dropped out under their watch. When it comes to test scores, 72% of kids are achieving the provincial standard, up 18 percentage points from 54%—just over half—before we took office.

We have invested heavily in education. We're proud to make those investments in education, because our kids are worth it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Again to the Acting Premier: Students and families are paying the price for this government's misplaced priorities. We are told there have been no cuts to the classroom. Maybe the minister should check whatever version of facts she's using today. Page 230 of the budget clearly lays out a \$250-million cut in-year; \$22.5 million in cuts to special education, impacting our most vulnerable kids; and in Toronto, 215 teachers fired and 100 ESL instructors fired, all because of cuts.

The minister has lost all credibility and has created chaos in our schools. The only person in this province who should be getting a pink slip is the Minister of Education. Will the Acting Premier issue the Minister of Education a pink slip for creating chaos in our schools?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: What I think we all understand—except perhaps the member opposite—is that school funding is based on the number of students. When you have the enrolment going down in-year, yes, we make in-year adjustments because there are fewer students. But despite the reduction in the number of students, the funding for special education has continued to rise.

What is creating a problem in our schools, Speaker—and you would understand this—is that we have a situation where in the English public schools, the teachers are on a partial strike and are refusing to produce report cards. They're refusing to do extracurricular activities. The CUPE workers are refusing to clean the

halls and some of the education workers are refusing to man the security system. None of those actions is acceptable.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Ma question porte sur le sujet du vaccin annuel contre la grippe.

Speaker, doctors will know that the annual flu season can actually be quite debilitating and of course has a range of effects, from absenteeism to fevered illness to hospitalization and, unfortunately, in the case of several hundred people annually, death.

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Avoidance measures like cough and sneeze etiquette and frequent handwashing, of course, are to be employed to avoid the spread through viral droplets. Patients will often ask, "Why does the injection change?" The injection changes annually because the viruses involved change annually.

So I ask the minister, when will this important offer from the government of Ontario—flu shot immunization—be available for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke North for this very timely question.

I'm pleased to say that yesterday morning I launched, at a pharmacy, in fact, this fall's flu immunization program. So starting this week, starting immediately, the free flu vaccine is available for all Ontarians at doctors' offices, nurse-led clinics, public health units, community clinics and of course our pharmacies.

For the first time, this year we're going to offer a new vaccine, a quadrivalent vaccine, against the flu that protects our children and youth from ages two to 17 years. It protects them against four different strains of flu instead of the usual three. So this quadrivalent vaccine is now available to that age group.

When you get vaccinated against the flu, you build up your immunity, making yourself stronger and more resistant. I encourage all Ontarians, including our health care workers, importantly, to get vaccinated against the flu, and do it early.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I particularly enjoyed the minister's response describing that very powerful vaccine as "Qaadri-valent."

Having said that, Minister, as you will know, part of the principle of medicine is immunization, because prevention is always better than cure. We, as physicians, know that unfortunately flu-type illnesses can affect the extremes of age: our older populations as well as our younger populations—those under five.

Of course, it can be a bit of a negotiation when you're trying to inflict or offer or inject young children. But I understand now, Minister, that the government of Ontario is actually going to be envisioning and offering other injectable or other immunization options, which I think is a welcomed development in the practice of medicine in

Ontario, and I would respectfully invite the minister to inform this House about that.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks again to the member from Etobicoke North.

This year, for the first time in this province, the flu vaccine will be available to kids for free in the form of a nasal spray. This is incredibly important for those of us who are parents who understand the challenge that we sometimes face in vaccinating our kids, particularly on an annual basis, and them wanting to avoid every needle that they can.

So for children and youth between the ages of two and 17, the same “Qaadri-valent” vaccine is available, but in the form of a nasal spray. As mentioned earlier, there are more ways than ever to get vaccinated: through your local pharmacy, through your primary care provider, public health units and community and workplace clinics. There’s really not an excuse not to get vaccinated, and Ontarians should get vaccinated early.

TEACHERS’ COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, good morning. My question is for the Minister of Finance. The story concocted by the government to explain the millions paid out to the teachers’ unions for hotels and pizzas is starting to show cracks.

Last month’s public accounts detail Ministry of Education payments to hotel chains, so it’s clear they do business directly with the hotels. Here’s a sampling: Holiday Inn, \$54,778; Westin, \$56,826; Best Western, \$87,413; Marriott, \$254,665; and Sheraton, \$301,313.

To the Minister of Finance: If the government regularly pays for these hotels directly, why would they need to make payments to teachers’ unions?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You won’t know when I will strike.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I was actually going to give them the answer and explain that, in fact, with the exception of one hotel, those hotels didn’t actually have collective bargaining going on at them. What they did have was professional development for principals. They had consultations going on about the GSN, in some cases. There were regional meetings for educators, and there were probably some training sessions at one of them for one of your own members’ private members’ bills. There was a variety of education events. Only one of those hotels has negotiations going on at it in one location, and that would be the government’s hotel rooms. Yes, we do have hotel rooms ourselves.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: If I wanted a non-answer to my question, I would have directed it to the Minister of Education.

The people of Ontario want answers regarding their finances, so again to the finance minister: We now know that \$750,000 worth of local hotels were booked by the Ministry of Education last year. Public accounts also details payments of nearly \$600,000 for catering. It’s clear the Ministry of Education paid for the hotels and food suppliers directly. Interestingly enough, none of them were for pizza chains.

The minister made payments to the teachers’ unions with no receipts, and then made payments for the hotels and food suppliers directly. Where did the money really go?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Where the money really went was to the hotel chain and the caterers for meetings that had absolutely nothing to do with collective bargaining in the vast majority of things which he mentioned.

That actually, however, does prove the point that those are for the most part one-off, one-day or two-day meetings, and if one-day or two-day meetings cost that much when you’re replicating them in regions all over the province, think how much it costs if you actually are doing collective bargaining and you’re at the hotel for a whole year.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Acting Premier. This week, the Premier will be visiting my beautiful riding of Niagara Falls for the entire Ontario Economic Summit. The people of Niagara and all our elected officials, including Al Caslin, the regional chair, all the mayors, as well as the regional and city councils will all tell her that they support daily, two-way GO rail service to Niagara. This project will create thousands of good-paying jobs in the region and bring nearly \$200 million in economic benefits to Niagara.

The last federal government committed to supporting GO service to Niagara Falls, and now Justin Trudeau has promised billions for the GO rail system. The Premier is meeting with him today. Will the Premier ask Mr. Trudeau for the funding so that she can come to Niagara and announce a plan for daily, two-way GO rail service all the way to beautiful Niagara Falls?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member opposite for the question today. Of course, I’ve had the pleasure, as have many on this side of the House, including the Premier, as he mentioned, to meet with representatives from Niagara region over the last number of months. Of course, I believe that member would know that our member from St. Catharines is a champion for his region and for his community, and he has repeatedly talked about the need for us to move forward on this very important file.

Of course, I think this question goes to the very heart of why it’s so important that we have a Premier and a

government in place here in Ontario that believes in the importance of making the tough decisions to build the province up. It's interesting that that member and that caucus would be asking this kind of question on the exact same day when they stand up and question our decision to go forward with investing in crucial infrastructure.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, I'll answer the member's question: 170 municipalities have voted and said no to selling hydro; 85% of Ontarians have said no to selling hydro. There is a better way.

In the last general election, the Premier called increased GO train service to Niagara Falls a "very high priority." The Liberal member from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, your Liberal cabinet chair, said that he could see all-year GO rail service coming in 2015. But I haven't seen any action. The word "Niagara" appears nowhere in Metrolinx's most recent five-year plan.

Will the Premier keep her promise to the people of Niagara and immediately fund daily two-way GO rail service all the way to beautiful Niagara Falls?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for his follow-up question. Of course the Ministry of Transportation and Metrolinx will continue to work with the region of Niagara as we sort through some of the technical information that they provided to us, and that we look forward to providing back to them in terms of that ongoing dialogue.

But of course, that member must surely know what a ridiculous contradiction it is for him to stand in this House mere minutes after his leader stands up and questions our motivation and our Premier's motivation with respect to making sure that tough decisions are made so we can invest in infrastructure. Mere minutes later, he stands up and says, "What my leader said is true for everybody except for my home region." That kind of unfortunate direction from that member is exactly why they're sitting where they are and exactly why their federal cousins are also sitting where they are.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

New question?

CITIZENS' AWARDS

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade. Minister, I believe that we are the most diverse province in Canada, with people representing many different languages, cultures, interests and talents. I also believe, and I'm sure many would agree, that Ontarians are some of the kindest and most generous people in the world. I say that because every day I see people in my riding of Etobicoke Centre volunteering their time and participating in community projects to help make our community an even better place to live.

I think it's important that our government celebrate and show pride and gratitude to these people whenever possible for their contributions to our communities.

Could the minister please tell the House how the government recognizes these outstanding citizens?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Etobicoke Centre. He's really a champion of our diversity in Ontario.

My ministry is the home of the Ontario Honours and Awards Secretariat, which works year round to recognize and thank Ontarians for a variety of wonderful things and reasons. Whether it be recognition of skills and talent, thanking dedicated Ontarians for lifelong service to the province or rewarding volunteers, we know how important it is to recognize outstanding citizens.

Ontario Honours and Awards delivers 17 recognition programs. Included in these programs are the Order of Ontario, the medal for good citizenship, the June Callwood award for volunteerism, the medal for young volunteers and more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you to the minister for his response. These sound like excellent opportunities for Ontarians to nominate people in their communities who have provided an outstanding contribution.

As the minister mentioned, we have people who dedicate so much of their time to helping their communities and making the world a better place. There are so many areas in which Ontarians do that; there are so many areas in which Ontarians excel. For example, I think one of the areas is in academia, in post-secondary education, with multiple post-secondary institutions ranked in the top 100 in the world. We have a new Nobel prize and more. We have much to be proud of here in Ontario.

In addition, we have many creative leaders who call Ontario home. These creative minds are sure to have been encouraged and nurtured from a young age. It's one of the reasons I think it's so important to get youth involved in the creative process at a young age.

Would the minister please inform the House of any programs that help recognize achievement in the creative arts specifically?

Hon. Michael Chan: I'm more than happy to do that. Our government offers a number of recognition programs for the creative arts. Just yesterday, I was pleased to join the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell and the Honourable James Bartleman to present six young talented aboriginal women with the James Bartleman Aboriginal Youth Creative Writing Award. The award celebrates aboriginal youth for their creative writing efforts and provides them with an opportunity to showcase their work to a broader audience.

Congratulations to Leera, Emily, Darienne, Rachel, Catherine and Justice on being selected as young writers. I hope this recognition will inspire them to keep writing and expressing themselves through their words.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, we learned in the Toronto Sun that the government is going to amend the Municipal Act to allow all municipalities to charge their own municipal

land transfer tax. There's only one taxpayer, Speaker, and they are already stretched to the limit.

Affordable home ownership is becoming a growing challenge for many Ontario families. At a time when we should be encouraging home ownership, the government is prepared to hit homeowners with \$10,000 in taxes on the average-priced Ontario home.

Will the Acting Premier, before it is too late, stop the imposition of any new municipal land transfer taxes?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's be clear: No decision has been made. We're currently consulting with our municipal partners, something that the opposition, when they were in power, did not do. All they did was download and impose stress on those municipalities.

We recognize that we have to have a strong working relationship with them. Working together, we can ensure that services to their communities are maintained and are predictive. We're currently reviewing the Municipal Act, and we're consulting, and that's all we're doing at this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's not up to municipalities. It's up to this Premier and her cabinet to make that power and give that power to municipalities.

The spread of a municipal land transfer tax would make Ontario the most uncompetitive tax jurisdiction in North America when it comes to buying a home.

The article in the Toronto Sun also noted that during the 2014 election campaign, this government said it had no plans to extend municipal land transfer tax powers to other municipalities beyond Toronto.

From hydro rates to land transfer taxes, the government is pricing people out of owning a home. There is still time to stop this flawed policy. Again, I'm going to ask the question: Will you commit today to not giving any more municipalities the ability to charge a municipal land transfer tax?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The opposition member is asking us not to review the Municipal Act. The member opposite is saying that. What we're doing is receiving input from municipalities, and absolutely no decisions have been made at this time.

As part of the review of the Municipal Act, we've been meeting with municipalities to discuss a variety of issues—issues that include sufficient accountability and transparency; whether municipalities have the powers and tools to deliver those services effectively; and what barriers municipalities face in achieving their financial sustainability. We would encourage municipalities and

the public to engage with their councils, as we welcome their input as part of our review.

They want to put their heads in the sand. We recognize that we have to have open consultations. That's exactly what we're doing. We'll allow the people to speak their minds and let them be heard.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, good morning to you. My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Jobs for Youth Program provides disadvantaged youth on Manitoulin Island who are aged 15 to 18 with the equivalent of eight weeks of full-time paid work with local employers.

In August, the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board received word from your ministry that funding would be drastically cut. What, if anything, is your ministry doing to help unemployed and disadvantaged youth find work on Manitoulin Island and in northern communities?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member opposite for that question. My ministry and our government have been investing in the people of Ontario. We believe that the people of Ontario are the greatest assets of this country, of this nation. That's why we have been investing quite heavily in training and education—as well as in research and innovation, actually, for that matter.

1130

The youth employment strategy of Ontario: We have invested \$300 million in the youth jobs strategy, and we will continue to invest in the training and education of our youth as we move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again to the minister: Manitoulin Island. The allocation for La Cloche is for seven youth, a reduction from 58, or an 88% cut.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board and its 18 member municipalities sent a letter to the Premier, stating they "need to understand how the ministry can reduce the number of youth placements from 111 ... to 19.... This represents an 83% reduction in the number of high-risk youth obtaining summer jobs."

Minister, the district services board asked at AMO for a meeting. They were denied. They're asking again. Don't leave these youth behind. When will you agree to meet with them?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to meet with everyone, with every youth group, student group and so on and so forth. We are open for discussion. We are open to learn from our youth.

Mr. Speaker, we have introduced the Youth Job Connection program, which is a continuation of the youth jobs strategy. Since we came to office, we have invested quite heavily in the training and education of youth, and we will continue to invest.

Youth Job Connection served almost 25,000 students to find job placements in the past. We will continue to invest in youth education.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. I was pleased that Bill 66, the Great Lakes Protection Act, made its way through the House, committee and now passing third reading on October 7. This is the third time a Great Lakes protection act had been brought forward to this Legislature. I want to thank all those who participated and brought their ideas and concerns for the Great Lakes to these conversations.

As a member whose riding is on Lake Ontario, I understand perhaps more particularly how passionate Ontarians are and how much they care about their Great Lakes. My question, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, is this: What would this bill mean for the health and protection of our Great Lakes, and how will it benefit all Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to thank the member from Burlington for her very thoughtful question.

I think her own community is an example of it. As many of us know, we've had to replace the operating rooms in the hospital there twice, after construction, within 24 months. Mayor Goldring will tell us that the stormwater sewer systems in Burlington are being overwhelmed by regular events that exceed the hundred-year flood level.

Burlington is a relatively new community. We're talking about a lot of new infrastructure. That affects water quality, and that affects the entire economy of communities like Burlington on the lakes.

The Great Lakes Protection Act is an extraordinarily powerful piece of legislation, because it creates valuable networks and supports in communities for local action on water quality, water protection and bringing all the players together locally.

In my supplementary, I'll elaborate on some examples of how this is working so well already.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. I'm thrilled to hear that the strengthened bill emphasizes restoring the Great Lakes' good health and ensuring that they are drinkable, swimmable and fishable for generations to come.

It is important, however, that we create opportunities for the public to become involved in their protection and restoration. I understand that an important feature of this legislation is the creation of the Great Lakes council.

Speaker, can the minister please share with this House who the council will bring together and what its mandate will be?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, through you to the member from Burlington and to my colleagues: It really is the connective tissue that brings all kinds of community efforts together.

Yesterday evening, I had the great pleasure of spending a good part of the evening with our source-water protection committees. All of the members in the House from the southern three quarters of the province have

them. They were very aware of the act. They said to me that we have 20 of the 22 plans approved now, and we have the other two coming in the next few weeks. Next year will be our first year with source-water protection plans for all Ontarians.

They said we've got to work with indigenous people. We have to get alignment of municipal plans. We have to work with our conservation authorities, our mayors, our local businesses. We've got challenges on the Great Lakes, with low water levels causing damage to marine infrastructure and, in other years, it being destroyed by ice. All of this involves that. The guardians' council, which is not an imposed regulatory body—it's a volunteer body—allows for these connections to happen and for local plans to be implemented and for local collaboration, which is what we think is so important.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Attorney General. Last week, Scott Tod, deputy commissioner of the OPP, and representatives from the RCMP as well as the FBI, spoke on a cross-border investigation that led to over 190 arrests for human-trafficking-related offences in the United States and Canada. Scott Tod emphasized the importance of information-sharing, collaboration and sharing of resources between regional jurisdictions in order to combat human trafficking.

In my motion that I tabled earlier this year, which was unanimously supported by the House, I called for the creation of a task force to coordinate a team of officers and crown attorneys and establish consistent, specialized services for victims.

When will the government take the necessary action to combat human trafficking more effectively and create this provincial task force?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent question. I am going to check, but I believe that there is already this group working together.

I know that when I was the Minister of Public Safety, human trafficking was a very, very important point. I know that the police officers and every police group in Ontario were working together along with the RCMP. I know that my ministry has the crown working together. Our government has a consolidated approach to combat human trafficking and raise awareness on this issue, including initiatives focused on prevention, enforcement and supporting victims. Our ministry funds a broad range of support and services for victims of human trafficking.

I'll continue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I know the group has done excellent work, but they need help. The insidious nature of human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. It is hidden. It's not isolated to a single jurisdiction. The government needs to create the task force that will allow local law enforcement agencies to collaborate and open lines of communication. It needs a concerted effort to stop human trafficking across Canada, and especially in

Ontario, where there are the largest domestic human trafficking rings that we know of.

In the press conference last week, Operation Northern Spotlight emphasized that victims are not always socially or economically disadvantaged and that they rarely identify themselves to authorities during investigations.

In creating a specialized task force, which would give more resources to probably the largest-growing crime in Ontario, how are you going to help the victims feel safe that they can come forward and bring offenders to justice?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, Mr. Speaker, my ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General, has provided specialized training to prosecutors, police and victim services staff. Prosecutors, police and victim services staff consult with each other and with other justice partners to share knowledge and best practices. As I said, we have quite a few programs that are available to help victims. We have Victim Crisis Assistance Ontario. We have the Victim Quick Response Program. We have the sexual assault centres. We have the Victim/Witness Assistance Program. We have the Victim Support Line, where someone can call and get the service. We offer this service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and in 150 languages. We have also the Victim Services Directory and many other services that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Algoma-Manitoulin has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board. This matter will be debated today at 6 p.m.

DEFERRED VOTES

STRENGTHENING CONSUMER PROTECTION AND ELECTRICITY SYSTEM OVERSIGHT ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 POUR RENFORCER LA PROTECTION DES CONSOMMATEURS ET LA SURVEILLANCE DU RÉSEAU D'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010 and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2010 sur la protection des consommateurs d'énergie et la Loi de 1998 sur la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

On September 24, 2015, Mr. Chiarelli moved second reading of Bill 112, An Act to amend the Energy Consumer Protection Act, 2010, and the Ontario Energy Board Act, 1998.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Balkissoon, Bas	Hillier, Randy	Naqvi, Yasir
Ballard, Chris	Hoggarth, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Qadri, Shafiq
Brown, Patrick	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Campbell, Sarah	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Lalonde, Marie-France	Scott, Laurie
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mahi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	Taylor, Monique
Dickson, Joe	Mantha, Michael	Thibeault, Glenn
Dong, Han	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Duguid, Brad	Martow, Gila	Vanthof, John
Fedeli, Victor	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daine
Fife, Catherine	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Forster, Cindy	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Fraser, John	McMahon, Eleanor	Yakabuski, John
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Yurek, Jeff
Gates, Wayne	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those against, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 96; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 22, 2015, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on government notice of motion number 42, relating to the allocation of time on Bill 113.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

On Monday, October 26, 2015, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 42. All those in favour of the motion please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Mordi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggart, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	Orazietti, David
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Sousa, Charles
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Thibeault, Glenn
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dong, Han	McGarry, Kathryn	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMahon, Eleanor	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Natyshak, Taras
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Hillier, Randy	Sattler, Peggy
Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Scott, Laurie
Brown, Patrick	Hudak, Tim	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Jones, Sylvia	Smith, Todd
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Taylor, Monique
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fife, Catherine	Mantha, Michael	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Martow, Gila	Walker, Bill
French, Jennifer K.	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Gates, Wayne	McNaughton, Monte	Yakabuski, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yurek, Jeff
Gretzky, Lisa	Munro, Julia	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 52; the nays are 44.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1153 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**MOTHERS AND OTHERS MARCH**

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to commend participants in today's MOM, or Mothers and Others March, at Queen's Park in support of eating disorder sufferers, their families and their friends.

Let me first begin by acknowledging members of the National Initiative for Eating Disorders who are with us today, including their founder and president, Wendy Preskow.

It was an honour to speak at their march and to host their press conference earlier this afternoon. This was an emotional day, and I want to thank you for the tremendous strength and courage that all of the members have

shown today. Know this: Your efforts are shining a light on eating disorders and providing a beacon of hope for those suffering in the shadows.

Today's Mothers and Others March at Queen's Park is one of six in Canada, in conjunction with one on Capitol Hill in Washington. These marches are sending a message that our health care system must do better in treating, diagnosing and raising public awareness about eating disorders. The need to act couldn't be more urgent. We know eating disorders are 12 times more likely to lead to death than any other mental illness.

But there is hope for treatment, and that's why I wrote to Minister Hoskins in May. I asked him to be a champion for this devastating mental illness and for Ontario to lead the way in developing a national strategy on eating disorders. The lack of action is disappointing. But on behalf of those who have an eating disorder and the hundreds of thousands of family members suffering with them, I want to repeat that call: We need to do better, and we start today.

IAN BOS

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today, I would like to take the opportunity to highlight an outstanding man I met over the summer months named Ian Bos.

On January 16, 2015, his father, Ted Bos, passed away after a brave fight with cancer. On May 21, 2015, Ian departed from the east coast on a cross-country walk in memory of his father and in honour of the excellent care his father, Ted, received. Ian's goal was to raise \$25,000 for the Aberdeen Palliative Care Society and to raise funds and awareness for palliative care societies across Canada, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association and the provincial palliative care associations.

Yesterday, Ian arrived in Victoria, toured the Legislative Assembly, and completed his final two kilometres, before dipping his feet in the west coast waters, bringing closure to an amazing feat.

Congratulations, Ian, for completing this incredible journey which lasted 159 days and covered over 6,000 kilometres.

Every community that Ian stopped into, every person he met, everyone who walked alongside Ian has learned a great deal from Ian's experience.

Thank you for your inspiration, Ian, and for challenging many Canadians, raising awareness of palliative care and the importance of hospice homes and workers across the country. End-of-life care matters. It really does. It was a joy and honour to share part of this walk with you. I hope our paths cross again.

ATLANTIC PACKAGING PRODUCTS LTD.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I rise today on the occasion of Manufacturing Month and to recognize a hallmark company in Scarborough, Atlantic Packaging Products Ltd., which is celebrating its 70th anniversary.

Started as a family-owned paper bag company in 1945, Atlantic Packaging currently employs approximately 1,400 people and has 21 manufacturing plants and warehouses providing good manufacturing jobs right here in Ontario.

The Ontario government played a part in this growth, too, as their Whitby paper mill was able to add jobs last year thanks to the help of Ontario's Industrial Electricity Incentive Program. Through this mill and other sites, Atlantic continues to lead in clean energy. This project creates steam from paper mill residual biosolids to reduce natural gas consumption.

Early on, Atlantic pioneered the use of 100%-recycled containerboard in North America, and currently this process results in saving over 15 million trees per year.

At the heart of this company lies a true entrepreneurial spirit, headed by Mr. Irving Granovsky, the chairman. Atlantic Packaging is a shining example of how employing innovation, management techniques and technology can lead to growth that is sustainable and environmentally friendly.

I would like to mark their 70th anniversary on the occasion of Manufacturing Month and commend them for bringing good jobs to Ontario and making our province grow.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Today, I'd like to bring a statement with regard to MS, multiple sclerosis. Canada has the highest rate of multiple sclerosis in the world. Not only do 100,000 Canadians live with the disease, but their families, friends and communities do as well. In Ontario, over 37,000 people are living with this disease.

The unpredictability and invisible nature of the disease creates a challenge for Canadians living with MS and their caregivers, as it affects their employment and financial security. Ontarians with MS need our support to ensure continued employment while respecting the daily challenges they face.

It is our job as parliamentarians to ensure that policies are in place so that MS patients have access to quality, coordinated care. We need to streamline the drug approval process to ensure that new medications and treatments are available for MS patients. We need to ensure that ADP process paperwork is minimized to ensure patients have access to the aids they will need.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I carry around a carnation to show my solidarity with the MS community in the fight against MS. I urge each of us to join the fight to end MS in our lifetime and effect positive change in the lives of those impacted by the disease today.

STEEL INDUSTRY

Mr. Paul Miller: US Steel bought Stelco in 2007, based on 31 promises around employment, production, capital investment, pension funding and community support. It has broken those promises again and again, enabled by Harper's federal government.

In September, it transferred many of its Canadian contracts to its US plants. Now it says that the very loss of those contracts—which it caused, Speaker—means it can't afford to meet its obligations.

US Steel Canada has stopped paying property taxes in municipalities like the city of Hamilton and it has suspended health, medical and dental benefits and life insurance for 20,000 families and retirees. This is both an insult and an injury to people who suffered enormous health difficulties because of their work. My office has heard from countless pensioners who cannot afford essential medicines. They fear for their lives, Speaker.

I would like to acknowledge the provincial government and the Minister of Finance for providing \$3 million in emergency transitional assistance. The fund will, over the next six months, help retirees with critical health needs and facilitate their transition to any available support schemes, such as the Trillium Drug Program or the Ontario Drug Benefit Program. But this fund will not and could never be enough, and it won't last long, Speaker.

There will be mounting health care bills from US Steel's actions, which will be borne by retirees themselves, their families, their communities and, ultimately, the province as well. Broken promises lead to broken budgets and broken lives.

MANUFACTURING MONTH

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: October is Manufacturing Month in Ontario. I am proud to celebrate with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in Ontario. In my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South and all over Ontario, manufacturing is an essential part of the economy. Despite changes in the manufacturing base and fierce global competition, the sector grows stronger each day, due, in part, to the spirit of innovation which drives modern manufacturing.

Our government is working closely with the industry to foster innovation by leveraging investments, like Pratt and Whitney in Mississauga, to help it seize new opportunities and create great jobs.

1510

Bison Transport's new facility in my riding is also a sign of manufacturing strength. Bison just opened a \$25-million, state-of-the-art, 19,000 square-foot terminal that makes it a transport leader throughout the region.

I'm so very proud of the many companies in my riding for their hard work, for their leadership and for the thousands of great jobs they provide to my constituents. I'm also proud to be part of a government that supports our manufacturers in the province of Ontario.

SOUTHAMPTON HOSPITAL

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: The Saugeen Memorial Hospital in Southampton has become a true testimony to the difference that dedicated citizens can make. I am pleased that the community will finally achieve their goal

of a new emergency room and laboratory in their local hospital.

The project will expand the emergency and lab departments, a change that has been needed for quite some time. Just imagine, to get into the waiting hall, if you will, of a hospital, you would have to walk through a triage. Essentially, that's the reality they've been living with for too long. And the waiting room in the ER is not air-conditioned. They could only find a way to prop a small fan above the doorway to the hallway where people lined up in chairs waiting for their turn to see a doctor.

This improvement has been needed for years. Now, with the ministerial approval granted to tender the project, it is expected that the project will be completed, finally, by the fall of 2018.

While the province provides the bulk of the funding, the role of the community has been vital to the project's success. Volunteers and supportive community members came through and worked tirelessly towards the \$2.9-million goal. To quote the fundraising chair, Tony Sheard, they are "this close," Speaker.

I'm pleased to say that as of this past summer, the campaign is a mere \$150,000 away from its fundraising goal, and they're going to achieve it. Congratulations.

And all I have to say to wrap up is, do not forget about the Kincardine hospital.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'm very proud to have been a part of the fight against multiple sclerosis. For many years in my community of Cambridge and indeed in Waterloo region, I've cared for individuals and their families dealing with multiple sclerosis as a community nurse, a critical care nurse and as a care coordinator for the community care access centre.

These families have complex needs: trying to raise children, work and plan for their futures. With Canada having the highest rate of MS in the world, it's our job as public servants to support citizens of this great country when they're faced with such an unpredictable disease.

As my colleague across the way said earlier, in Ontario, over 37,000 people are living with this disease. Those Ontarians face a host of physical, mental and economic effects brought on by the disease itself and the challenges it creates for these people and those who are caring for them.

I encourage my fellow members to advocate for income and employment support systems which will ensure that those that are affected by MS will get the help that they need as soon as they need it. Quality and co-ordinated health care is also integral to ensure that those living with MS and their loved ones can continue to live healthy, independent and fulfilling lives.

Today I am standing in my place in my fight against MS, and I encourage all of you in the House to do so, as well as the constituents in my riding. We need to show solidarity against MS.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further member statements?

The member from Newmarket-Aurora.

EVAN LEVERSAGE

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to honour a community in your riding that has come together to show support for Evan Leversage, who has been battling brain cancer for five of his seven years.

This past weekend, the entire community in the small town of St. George, in the riding of Brant, brought Christmas to Evan. On Saturday, a parade with more than two dozen floats, including Santa Claus himself, passed by Evan's house in St. George. When Evan's family learned that their son's brain tumour had spread, they decided to celebrate Christmas early this year, at the suggestion of their doctors.

With only two days of organizing, the community showed an outpouring of support for the request of Evan's family: 7,000 joined Saturday's celebration, more than double the population of this small town in Brant. They lined Evan's street, cheering as he passed by the festive lit houses, sitting next to Santa in his sleigh.

During the ceremonies, Brant county police and firefighters presented Evan with uniforms and made him their honorary member. Children handed him cards. Evan's neighbours decked out their homes with lights and decorations. Snow machines blew for hours, blanketing parts of Evan's street in a gentle snowfall. His family says that they are still overwhelmed by the response from their town and from the presents and messages that they've received from their incredibly caring community in St. George and throughout Brant, Ontario, Canada and beyond.

Today, through you Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the great people of St. George, your constituents, for the way they supported this boy and his family at this very difficult time. May we all respond with the same compassion and generosity to the people in need in all our communities.

Merry Christmas, Evan.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did give him some extra time. Thank you.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated October 27, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to

standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (PAROLE), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS (LIBÉRATION CONDITIONNELLES)

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 130, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act in respect of parole / Projet de loi 130, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne les libérations conditionnelles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The bill provides that an inmate granted parole has to sign their certificate of parole or they will not be released. Currently, the Ontario Parole Board is allowed to release an inmate even if the inmate does not sign their certificate of parole if, in the opinion of the board, compelling or exceptional circumstances exist.

The bill also provides that if an inmate who committed sexual or domestic violence is released on parole, their location must be electronically monitored unless they do not pose a safety risk to their victim.

OPPORTUNITY IN THE SHARING ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES POSSIBILITÉS OFFERTES PAR L'ÉCONOMIE DE PARTAGE

Mr. Hudak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend other Acts to regulate transportation network vehicles, to provide freedom for individual residential property owners to share their property for consideration with others and to deal with the expenses of public sector employees and contractors in that connection / Projet de loi 131, Loi visant à édicter deux nouvelles lois et à modifier d'autres lois pour réglementer les véhicules de réseau numérique de transport, pour donner aux particuliers propriétaires de biens résidentiels la liberté de partager leur bien avec d'autres moyennant contrepartie

et pour traiter des dépenses des employés et entrepreneurs du secteur public en lien avec ces questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, as you can tell, the explanatory notes for the bill are a little long, so I'll summarize. Basically, the bill creates a modern, streamlined, province-wide framework to allow the municipal licensing of transportation network vehicles, home sharing and parking sharing to help relieve the regulatory burden and get needed information to consumers about public safety and consumer protection measures.

Schedule 1 ensures that there's a balance between folks who use a sharing economy and those who do not when it comes to expenses and procurement in government.

Schedule 2 deals with amendments related to home and parking sharing, which allow residents to share their home up to 120 days per year without a licence and their parking spot up to 365 days a year without a licence.

Schedule 3 is governing legislation with respect to transportation network vehicles and their obligations for consumer protection and public safety.

The act is the first of its kind in Canada, Speaker. I look forward to second reading debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind all members that, as the member just did, you can shorten the explanatory notes, but your statement is always taken from the explanatory notes. I thank the member for doing so, because I knew the explanatory notes were quite long.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ACTION PLAN ACT (SUPPORTING SURVIVORS AND CHALLENGING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT), 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAN D'ACTION CONTRE LA VIOLENCE ET LE HARCELEMENT SEXUELS (EN SOUTIEN AUX SURVIVANTS ET EN OPPOSITION À LA VIOLENCE ET AU HARCELEMENT SEXUELS)

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 132, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to sexual violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence and related matters / Projet de loi 132, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne la violence sexuelle, le harcèlement sexuel, la violence familiale et des questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: This is a very important day. We've just introduced legislation that, if passed, will amend six government acts. If passed, the legislation will improve support for survivors in the justice system while protecting students and workers, as well, from the threat of sexual violence and harassment. All Ontarians would benefit from living without the threat and experience of sexual violence and harassment.

PRECISION PIPE MANUFACTURING INC. ACT, 2015

Mr. Thibeault moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Precision Pipe Manufacturing Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY SUPPLEMENTS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

Mrs. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 respecting permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: The bill amends section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989

injuries under the pre-1997 act. It's a technical bill, but of great symbolic significance.

CONSERVATION LAND FAIRNESS ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ EN MATIÈRE DE TERRES PROTÉGÉES

Mr. Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to amend the Assessment Act to exempt land that is subject to certain conservation easements or covenants from taxation / Projet de loi 134, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation foncière afin d'exempter les biens-fonds visés par certaines servitudes ou certains engagements de l'imposition.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mike Colle: This is a bill that has been championed by the escarpment missionary Bob Barnett. The purpose of this act is to encourage private land-owners to grant easements or covenants to conservation bodies to help achieve Ontario's Biodiversity Strategy of preserving 17% of Ontario's territory. It is basically giving a tax break to people who help preserve our precious conservation lands.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Deputy House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 79 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bradley moves that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot item 79 be waived. Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In so doing, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients’ groups within one year.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Kyle to bring it down to the table—a fine young page from Algoma-Manitoulin.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled”—I could say now quadrupled—“as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

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“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I support this petition, sign my name to it, and send it down with page Faith.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I’m proud to introduce this petition that has been organized by Amy Grady, who is an MRI radiologic technologist in Windsor. For the sake of full disclosure, she is also my cousin, so I’m very proud of that fact. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas wait times are rising to 80+ days for an MRI in southwestern Ontario;

“Whereas experienced and qualified technologists are available to fill positions in this field, but lack of funding to hospitals only allows limited hours of operation;

“Whereas by allowing independent health facilities the licence to have MRI as an added modality, it would drastically cut wait times and create much-needed jobs;

“Whereas as a new open MRI would accommodate more patients with claustrophobia and larger size and keep tax dollars in our community;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Decrease MRI wait times and create jobs by increasing the funding for MRI services and implement a plan to allow MRI as a modality in independent health facilities in southwestern Ontario.”

Thank you very much, Speaker. I will send it to the Clerks’ table through Julia.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas fluoride ions in drinking water strengthen tooth enamel and prevent tooth decay in children and adults, just as adding chlorine kills bacteria in drinking water; and

“Whereas a large body of clear, conclusive and sound scientific evidence verifies that the practice of fluoridation of municipal drinking water by bringing the levels of naturally occurring fluoride up to a level of 0.8 to 1.0 milligram per litre of water has been shown to consistently reduce tooth decay and gum disease, and to reduce the need for expensive dental restoration; and

“Whereas after the common cold, preventable dental problems cause more absence from school than any other single cause; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to influence by misinformation and outright junk science;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend the applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water system processes across the province of Ontario.”

I will sign this and send it to the table with Cameron.

HUNTING

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, in the autumn of each year, Point Clark, Ontario, residents report hunters shooting towards the shoreline in the direction of private properties and people, hunters firing over adults' and children's heads while children played on the beach, hunting out of hours, wounded geese falling metres away from residents' windows, geese and ducks dying on residents' front lawns and the destruction of private property by irresponsible hunters;

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources allows hunting of geese, ducks, deer and turkey in residential areas and the crown lands adjacent to these residential areas on the lakefront at Point Clark. These hunting activities endanger the residents and their children of Point Clark, Ontario, in Huron-Kinloss township where these crown lands are 30 to 60 metres in width in front of private properties at Point Clark;

"Whereas Point Clark, Ontario, residents report irresponsible hunting to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), who only have two enforcement officers in Grey and Bruce county. Reports of hunting infractions are often not recorded, responded to in a timely manner or enforced by the MNR because of a lack of resources. The township of Huron-Kinloss cannot enforce its current noise bylaws because these adjacent crown lands are outside of township's boundaries and therefore the township's jurisdiction;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"(1) To ban hunting in residential areas in Ontario whether they are incorporated or unincorporated;

"(2) To ban hunting on adjacent crown lands within 200 metres of a private residence;

"(3) To make the pointing of a firearm used for the purpose of hunting towards a residence or a person within the range of that firearm an offence;

"(4) To increase the number of MNR enforcement officers so that hunting violations can be properly investigated, prosecuted and responded to in a timely matter; and

"(5) To safeguard our security and that of our children and grandchildren by implementing the above necessary measures."

I'll affix my signature to the petition and send it to the desk with Jade.

POLICE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the vast majority of police officers uphold and obey the law, however, when a police officer does break the law in a grievous manner, it reflects poorly on all police, the judicial system and the government; and

"Whereas when a police officer is suspended, no matter what the reason, the Police Services Act requires that they continue to receive full compensation, including benefits, the accumulation of sick days and even raises; and

"Whereas public confidence is negatively affected when such officers, after being found guilty and dismissed from service, continue to receive full compensation while appealing their convictions, leaving taxpayers with no recourse for cost recovery; and

"Whereas Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada where police officers must be suspended with pay, and does not give chiefs the discretion to suspend without pay an officer charged with an offence—or even convicted of an offence if the conviction is under appeal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Police Services Act to:

"(a) provide for the discontinuation of suspension with pay for police officers dismissed as a result of part V proceedings following serious criminal convictions, even during any subsequent appeal;

"(b) give police chiefs the ability to suspend officers without pay for serious criminal offences, or if officers charged are held in custody or subject to court-ordered conditions that would prevent them from carrying out their duties; and

"(c) give police chiefs the discretionary ability to suspend officers without pay for serious Police Services Act misconducts."

Speaker, I will give this petition to Kyle and let him bring it up to the desk.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Chris Ballard: I have a petition here about lung disease.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths ... lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I agree with this and will affix my signature.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

1540

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with page Samuel.

PRIVATISATION DES BIENS PUBLICS

M. Michael Mantha: « Hydro One, pas à vendre!

« Pétition à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit un projet de privatisation qui entraînera une hausse des tarifs d'électricité, une baisse de la fiabilité et des centaines de millions de dollars en moins pour nos écoles, nos routes et nos hôpitaux; et

« Attendu que le projet de privatisation sera particulièrement préjudiciable pour les communautés du Nord et des Premières Nations; et

« Attendu que le gouvernement provincial conçoit ce projet de privatisation dans le secret, faisant que les Ontariens n'ont pas un mot à dire sur un changement qui affectera sérieusement leur vie; et

« Attendu qu'il n'est pas trop tard pour annuler le projet;

« Compte tenu de cela, nous, les soussignés, pétitionnons l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario comme suit :

« Que la province de l'Ontario annule immédiatement son projet de privatisation du réseau de distribution d'électricité de l'Ontario. »

Je suis complètement d'accord avec cette pétition, et je la présente au page John pour l'apporter à la table des greffiers.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children;

"Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

"In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and that this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry's private member's bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

"Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage."

I support this petition and I'll sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME DES VÉRIFICATIONS DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 20, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks / Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 27, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have, in fact, received a deferral notice from the chief government whip, asking that the vote be deferred. This vote will now take place tomorrow after question period during the regular time for deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day?

**PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2015**
**LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION
AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES**

M^{me} Meilleur moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the Attorney General to lead off the debate.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I rise today to begin third reading on the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act. I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough Southwest, Lorenzo Berardinetti.

Over the past few weeks, we have had some very important conversations and debates on this bill. Je suis ravie de voir que le projet de loi progresse.

Free speech and public debate are essential for a robust democratic society. This is a principle that the legal community stands behind. C'est pourquoi des organismes comme l'Association du Barreau de l'Ontario, l'Association canadienne du droit de l'environnement et l'Association canadienne des libertés civiles ont endossé ce projet de loi.

Community leaders across Ontario have rallied in support of legislation combatting strategic lawsuits, including nearly 65 municipalities, PEN Canada, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, the Ontario Confed-

eration of University Faculty Associations and over 150 environmental organizations, among many others.

Of course, this bill has not been without some opposition. I would like to take a moment to address some of the views that were expressed against this bill during previous debates and during public hearings before the standing committee. We have heard from representatives of the forestry industry as well as from northern municipalities, who expressed a number of concerns; chiefly, that the bill would create a licence for environmental groups to defame resource industries, causing serious harm to northern economies and municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the members that this bill will not have that effect. Le projet de loi ne donne à personne carte blanche simplement parce que le sujet est d'intérêt public. Any civil action that relates to a truly harmful defamatory attack against a person or an organization would still proceed under this bill. Des attaques publiques infondées sur nos industries vitales dans le nord de l'Ontario ne seront pas permises.

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This bill would provide a process for the courts to evaluate whether free expression on a matter of public interest should be subject to a lawsuit by having the courts make an evaluation in several steps. First, the views expressed by a citizen must be on a matter of public interest and not simply a private quarrel or personal allegations. Second, there must be grounds to believe that the case can succeed on its merits. Finally, there must be some likely harm to the party that starts the lawsuit. Ainsi, un citoyen ne peut pas être réduit au silence ou puni pour la simple raison que la personne qui est la cible de l'expression n'est pas contente. Le tribunal devra être convaincu que le mal causé pèse plus que la valeur de la liberté d'expression dans l'intérêt public.

I believe this bill will empower citizens and organizations to speak out against injustices. Mr. Speaker, this province prides itself on the protection and promotion of the democratic rights of all of its citizens, and this bill, if passed, would be another way to expand those rights. If you believe that everyone deserves to be treated fairly in our court system, if you believe that larger, wealthier organizations should not be allowed to bully smaller opponents who have fewer resources, si vous pensez que les citoyens devraient se sentir libres de participer aux affaires publiques au lieu d'être réduits à ne pas oser exprimer leurs préoccupations par crainte de représailles, then the path forward is clear.

It's time we did the right thing. It's time we showed the rest of Canada what we stand for. I urge all my colleagues to stand with me in supporting this bill. Thank you. Merci.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I've listened to the Attorney General, as well as listening to the many people who came forward during committee to speak about this bill. I really would have preferred to wholeheartedly agree with

the Attorney General about this bill and about what it would do, because I surely believe that there is and has been, on a number of occasions, an abuse of process in our courts that has limited public participation. The courts, which are there to provide a remedy for people who are injured, have sometimes been used to abuse—there has been an abuse of process, and instead of preventing an injustice has actually been the cause of an injustice.

Unfortunately, this bill is not quite as perfect as the Attorney General has stated. That was heard often through the committee: that there were many people who did identify weaknesses. Once again, we saw during the committee that amendments were brought forward after hearing from the public—and the public was very limited in their ability to speak to this bill. Each deputant to the committee was only allotted five minutes to speak to this very important and substantive bill.

I want to first zero in on one comment that the Attorney General mentioned when she was referencing the concerns that we heard from our northern resource industries, that they felt that the way the bill was written may be used as a tool against our northern resource industries. The minister says that it has all been taken care of; it's not going to happen. Well, I want to draw the House's attention to some of the remarks that were made in committee on that specific reference, and it was my questions to Shane Moffatt from the organization Greenpeace. Just to provide some context, Greenpeace is embroiled in a lawsuit at the present time with Resolute industries. The evidence was clear. It was brought to the committee that Greenpeace Canada's volunteer program co-ordinator, Aspa Tzaras, sent out tens, if not hundreds of thousands of emails to individual members and supporters of Greenpeace and asked those people to do five different things—spread the word, sign the petition. But number four was the important one: Write a false product review on Best Buy's website. Now, Best Buy is the top customer for Resolute industries. "Write a false product review on Best Buy's website. Be creative and make sure to weave in the campaign issues," and "Change your Facebook profile...."

So here we have an environmental organization asking hundreds of thousands of people to engage in a falsehood, to engage in dishonest behaviour and hurt an outstanding corporate citizen, an employer in northern Ontario.

I questioned Shane Moffatt on this. He put it down to an error in translation. It was all a mistake. Somehow Greenpeace couldn't articulate in the English language correctly and they somehow got it wrong when it said, "Write a false product review." That was Mr. Moffatt's defence, that something got lost in the translation.

What my question to Mr. Moffatt was—and it was followed up by the member from Beaches-East York on the Liberal benches. I asked Greenpeace if this bill had retroactivity and if this bill had been in place prior to the suit, would it be of benefit to Greenpeace and would they be able to dismiss Resolute's lawsuit? Greenpeace didn't want to answer that.

But Murray Klippenstein of Klippenstein law, who also made a presentation at the committee, was also asked that question: Would this help Greenpeace in their campaign of falsehoods and dishonesty against Resolute? In direct response to Mr. Arthur Potts, the member for Beaches-East York—Mr. Potts said, "There was some evidence earlier about one environmental organization"—referring to Greenpeace—"who were counselling persons to write a false product review in order to ... tarnish the reputation of an organization so that they would stop using a certain product.

"Would the counselling of someone to write a false product review be a protected action, do you think, under a public interest" provision of this bill?

Mr. Murray Klippenstein's response was, "The answer is possibly yes," that this bill would protect people engaging in dishonest falsehoods and give them the protection of the law to engage in nefarious, dishonest activities.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Possibly.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Possibly. Possibly.

We heard from many people, Speaker, that there are weaknesses in this bill, that they could have been addressed. The bill is not quite as perfect as the Attorney General thinks.

We advocated that another component be included in the bill other than just an expression in the public interest, because that really is the crux of the matter with this bill. As long as someone expresses a statement in the interest of the public, that statement or those actions are safeguarded and protected.

1600

We advocated that there also be a good-faith component added to that public interest. If the statement was made in the public interest and in good faith, then they would be protected under Bill 52.

That thoughtful and reasonable approach was dismissed. It did not go forward, for whatever reason. I can't speak to the motivation. But I think anybody in any reasonable evaluation of this bill could hardly come to any other conclusion than that an expression made in good faith ought to be part of this bill.

I fear that we're going to have another bill in this House in a couple of years that is going to attempt to remedy the failings and the problems that this bill is going to create with the purpose of rectifying the problems that exist today. It all comes down to this government, actually, for once and occasionally listening to people, listening to not just experts, even though we need to listen to them. They also need to listen to people who are being affected by their legislation, and how and what consequences are going to result from the legislation that they put forward.

Here we have it. We have it on record that an environmental organization, Greenpeace, has purposely gone after and promoted falsehoods. Possibly, this bill is going to protect that sort of activity and action. I find that despicable. I find it atrocious that we're going to now potentially allow and permit the law to protect wrong-

doing. That's not in the best interests of society, it's not in the best interests of individuals, and it certainly goes against what our responsibilities are in this House.

We spoke to many people. Many people addressed the committee. There was another failing that was identified in the bill, and that was people who are already subjected to abuse of process and what might be considered a strategic lawsuit against their public participation. In the original manifestation of this bill, there were some provisions to assist and help those who are already facing an abuse of process. That provision was removed out of this bill. They are not offered any protection whatsoever.

It's unfortunate. I think this bill could have been done in a way that would have garnered unanimous support from all sides, from everyone, from every member, from every community, but it won't. I would like to have been able to say that I've encouraged the PC caucus to support this bill 100%, but I can't. The bill has failings, and the government was obstinate in their approach and prevented thoughtful, reasonable amendments from going forward and improving this bill.

It really is a disappointment, because the law is everyone's last refuge to seek and find remedy. The courts are everyone's last refuge and sanctuary against an injustice. This bill very purposely and very possibly will take away that refuge, take away that sanctuary for justice and actually permit and allow, encourage and facilitate an injustice happening.

Really, it boils down to—there are some other elements, but the key element is: Was the expression done in good faith? Who here would object to opinions and statements that are expressed in good faith? I was surprised that the Liberal members objected to ensuring that expressions of good faith were protected by the law. It needs more than just that the expression was done in the public interest.

The Attorney General mentioned that they're sharing their time. I'm not sure—I think maybe the parliamentary assistant will also be taking a portion of this debate. I would dearly wish to hear the parliamentary assistant's comments and response to these statements by Klippensteins and the statements made in committee. He was in committee as well. He heard the same things I heard: that these actions, these wrongdoings, may very well be protected by this legislation. I'd like to hear what they may have to say about those people who are presently facing injustice, facing a lawsuit and an abusive process, and who were hoping that this bill would provide them relief from that abusive process.

I'd like the parliamentary assistant to speak to those in this bill and encourage him to provide a convincing argument to myself and all members on this side of the House why we should support a bill that knowingly has failings in it, a bill that everyone knows could have been made better but the Liberal government chose not to. It was purposeful: They chose not to make the bill better.

I'll be listening. I hope they do address these concerns—and maybe hear something from the parliamentary assistant on what else they're going to do, now

that we're at third reading and there are no other options, there are no other vehicles to amend this bill now. It goes through the way it went through, as it was proposed at first reading, regardless of all the statements that were made, that enunciated and articulated where it was weak. I want to have the parliamentary assistant address that in his remarks. Because I am absolutely confident that we are going to hear of more abuses of process, that we are going to see more examples of wrongdoing, and that there will be further angst, hardship and injury by people who are seeking refuge and remedy in our courts but only finding further abuse in the courts.

I'm absolutely confident that a couple of years from now, there will be a few more stories in the Toronto Star—because we know that as soon as a story makes it into the Toronto Star, the Liberal government wakes up. It appears to be that the only publication that they read, or have a desire to read from, is the front page of the Toronto Star. When we see another Phil Demers, when we see another Esther Wrightman, when we see another Resolute on the front pages of the Toronto Star, then this same government is going to come forward with another bill to try to remedy the problems that they've created with this bill. That's what they're going to do; absolutely. I hope I'm here that day so I can maybe reread this speech when they bring in that next bill to fix what they're breaking today, what they're not fixing today.

1610

I look forward to listen and wait for the parliamentary assistant or whoever on the Liberal benches to explain why they're protecting somebody like Shane Moffatt at Greenpeace, who encourages people to write false product reviews. Why are they protecting that? Why didn't they act? I'm sure Greenpeace will be happy about this bill, but I'm sure there are many others who won't be. That's what we have seen from this government, day in and day out, since I was first elected: that they determine who will win in Ontario and who will lose. They determine and they pick winners and losers instead of bringing forth legislation that makes everyone a winner.

They believe they have god-like powers to pick winners and losers—to pick winners and create losers—in their approach to legislation. It's despicable. I hope one day that they wake up and say, "All people in Ontario are important, and we're going to bring forth legislation that helps and benefits everyone," not just their stakeholders or their supporters or their donors. Everyone in this province is important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's an honour to stand in this House and to debate Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest.

I would like to take the time I'm allotted here to talk about this bill from two perspectives. From a personal perspective, it's anti-SLAPP legislation. I'd like to

explain in common terms how it impacts people personally. I have lived through this experience. I would also like to talk about the threats that many northerners feel are proposed by this bill. I'm in favour of this bill. I think I'd like to put a different take on it as far as how it impacts northern Ontario.

Firstly, this bill is designed—and it has its flaws, as does any piece of legislation. This bill is designed to protect people who stand in the public interest. It's usually against private interests who hope to make money. I'm not against people trying to make money—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Or government.

Mr. John Vanthof: Or government. In my case, I was for many years a dairy farmer. At one point, I was president of the Temiskaming Federation of Agriculture. The Ontario Federation of Agriculture is widely respected across the province. It's a big organization. I was president of the Temiskaming chapter.

In Timiskaming, at that point, agriculture represented \$40 million at the farm gate, in my part of the world. It's a big driver. It continues to be. I was appointed to be on the public liaison committee of the Adams mine landfill proposal. There was a time when the city of Toronto proposed to take all their waste and dump it into an iron ore mine north of our farms. It was my job, on that committee, to protect the farmers' interests. We weren't against the proposal; we were just out to protect our interests.

This proposal went on for a good 10 years—15 years, actually. It was fully licensed by the Ministry of the Environment. But, at one point, we realized that some of the science that it was based upon, in our opinion, wasn't sound. We voiced that opinion—actually came here to Queen's Park at the media gallery here. One of the reasons I became an NDP member is because the only person who would actually book the media gallery for me was the member for Timmins-James Bay. We voiced our opinion that the information that the government had based their approval of this project on wasn't sound. We put out a press release. I wrote a letter at that time to Premier Eves stating that we were going to ask for the licence to be repealed.

We were promptly sued by the company, Rail Haul North—and rightly so, because we were hampering their business. Here we were, a fairly influential group, coming out and saying, "Whoa, we think that you're harming—that this licence is given under false pretenses." At that point, under this legislation, we wouldn't pass the test. If the company said, "Wait a second. We are going to sue you," and we said, "Okay, but under public participation, we should be protected," we wouldn't be protected under this legislation, because we didn't provide any proof. At that point, we hired one of the most respected hydrogeologists in the world, Ken Howard—he's now at the University of Toronto—not to see if what we were saying was correct, but to critique the ministry's approval. Dr. Howard came out with a scathing critique of that.

As a result of that critique, a law was passed in this Legislature, the Adams Mine Lake Act, that prohibited

that pit from ever being drained to become a landfill. It was passed in this Legislature, but what didn't happen was the lawsuit against the Federation of Agriculture and myself wasn't dropped. One of the reasons I ran in 2007—not that I was overly interested in politics—but the law was passed, and the MPP before me was taking full credit for helping to pass the law—I didn't have a problem with that—but he didn't do anything to help me with my lawsuit.

The reason why strategic lawsuits are such a lethal tool for people is because when you get sued—I had a small business; I had a dairy farm. I was sued for \$10 million. I was young and foolish. If they had sued me for \$100,000, I would have been more worried at the time because maybe I could have begged and borrowed \$100,000, but \$10 million was so beyond my realm that it didn't really faze me until the bank wouldn't lend me any more money, and I couldn't get an operating loan to put my crops in. If it wasn't for my friends and neighbours who helped me, I would've lost my farm or I would have had to do what the company said and recant my statement. So I had a choice to make. I don't know if I'd make that choice again because it was a scary time, and that's what this bill is trying to alleviate.

Even when this Legislature had passed a law saying that Adams Mine was not suitable for a landfill, the lawsuit against me continued. This legislation would have given the Federation of Agriculture and my family a way to contest that and, hopefully, stop that lawsuit before it took as long as it did.

On the next issue: My riding depends heavily on forestry. There is an issue with Greenpeace. It has made, I would say, false statements by urging—basically someone from Greenpeace urged people to write a false product review on Best Buy's website against Resolute, and Resolute launched legal action.

1620

In the hearings it was asked, "Would Greenpeace be protected by this legislation?" One of the presenters said, "Well, possibly." That's the only answer you can give, because with this legislation, before it was mired in courts for years, it would have to have a pretest. Basically, within 60 days, Greenpeace and Resolute would go before a judge, and if Resolute could demonstrate that this was an attempt to hurt their business it would go to another court. It would proceed. It's not protecting Greenpeace; it's making the process quicker and more efficient.

So I would disagree that this is giving environmental organizations or others free reign to attack job creators. What this false argument is doing, though, is it's taking away from the reputation of what we are doing with forestry, with agriculture and even with mining in this province. We have developed some of the best forestry practices in the world; there's no reason why we should hide behind them. Resolute, Tembec and the other companies are miles ahead. We have the best sustainable forestry practices in the world, and this argument—and it's more a political argument than it is a factual argument—runs the risk of tarnishing that reputation.

The government should do everything in their power to make sure that the forestry sector is accredited for what they're doing. There are ads all over the province saying, "Good Things Grow in Ontario." We are very proud of our agriculture sector. And you know what? The government of Ontario should also help with an advertising campaign, because one of the good things that grows in Ontario is trees. They're renewable and restorable, and young, growing trees are actually great carbon sinks.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Plant another 150 million of them.

Mr. John Vanthof: We should plant a lot more. But we are planting a lot now. That's being lost in this debate.

The forestry sector in Ontario is very sustainable, it's very progressive and it can proudly stand against false accusations. This legislation would not make it any easier to make those false accusations because they still have to bear up to the witness of the law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today in support of Minister Meilleur's proposed Protection of Public Participation Act. Bill 52 is a bill that is very close to my heart because it's a bill that, from the beginning, has been about fighting for justice and equality.

We all know that strategic lawsuits against public participation have long been used as a tactic by companies or individuals to tie the hands of weaker opponents—typically those who cannot afford the cost of a lengthy legal battle. What we have is an unfair way to win an argument, and this needs to come to an end.

If passed, Bill 52 would give the courts the tools and resources they need to quickly identify strategic lawsuits. The bill's proposed fast-track review process would impose tighter time frames and require that a court hear a motion to decide the nature of the case within 60 days.

While this seems like a simple change, the effects of this process are far-reaching because this would stop organizations or individuals from trying to silence critics by using a strategic lawsuit and, ultimately, reduce the ability for our court system to be misused.

It's common knowledge that many strategic lawsuits have little or no merit and are often dropped before proceeding to trial. Bill 52 would help us weed out those lawsuits, while still allowing legitimate complaints to proceed in a timely manner. This legislation would also reduce the risk of citizens being threatened with legal action for voicing legitimate viewpoints by protecting individuals from being liable for defamation when their concerns are reported to the public through a third party, such as a blogger or a reporter; and also, making the adjudication tribunal process less time-consuming and costly by allowing parties to make written submissions about legal costs, instead of having to argue about these costs in person.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this bill will help bring fairness to our justice system.

As a proud Ontarian, one of the values I treasure the most is my right to speak up when I see wrongdoing in my community, so that I may bring about positive change for the benefit of all. Currently, this is not a right that everyone enjoys, as some organizations and individuals are being unfairly silenced through strategic lawsuits. With this bill, it is our hope that this practice will be brought to an end.

I would like read a quote from Professor Normand Landry, who has written a book on anti-SLAPP legislation: "[Bill 52] is a balanced, reasonable and effective way to proceed and protect freedom of expression from SLAPP suits in Ontario. It avoids the pitfalls associated with the determination of the plaintiff's intentions, which, unfortunately, is too often a key element of anti-SLAPP mechanisms."

The study of the provisions of Bill 52 allows us to conclude that, if passed as is, it would establish a legislative mechanism that would become an international model for countries around the world with a common-law legal tradition. We have heard from legal experts, community leaders and citizens from across Ontario. Each of them has sent a consistent message: Ontario needs Bill 52.

It's time we stand up for justice, fairness and equality, hallmarks of our great nation. It's time we make Ontario a leading example by enacting the Protection of Public Participation Act. I ask my colleagues in the Legislature today to join me in giving their firm support to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act, or the so-called anti-SLAPP bill.

We agree with taking steps to ensure that people and communities can voice their concerns without fear of strategic lawsuits against public participation, or SLAPPS. I know from my own experience how significant the impact of these lawsuits can be. I think it was \$2.5 million that I was being sued for. The only reason that I didn't worry much was, being a person of modest means, I knew they were never going to get it.

During the committee hearings on this bill, the justice committee had the opportunity to hear from more people who have had such experience. They heard about how it silenced not only the person being sued but others who were scared that they would be next. The committee heard about the impact that those lawsuits can have on families, as people worry about whether they will lose their house. They heard about the large amounts that community groups were paying for liability insurance because of the fear of being hit with a significant lawsuit.

It's clear that there is support for this bill, but it's also clear, Mr. Speaker, that there are still ways it could be improved. I've had the opportunity to speak to this bill before and I talked about a group of my constituents who are fighting a landfill proposal in my riding. They are concerned, as I am, that the landfill could put our drink-

ing water at risk. They are volunteers, seniors, homeowners, people who work in the area and even children. They're doing a great job of raising awareness, but many of them would not have the resources to handle it if the company proposing the landfill were to hit them with a lawsuit.

1630

I was pleased that a member from that group actually had the opportunity to come to Queen's Park and speak to this bill during the committee hearings. He was one of the few that got the opportunity because this bill that the government has also time-allocated—I just wanted to point out the irony of the government limiting debate on public input into the Protection of Public Participation Act.

Since the bill was introduced last December, the government has chosen to call it only three times, once in December and twice in March. The government simply didn't make it a priority to bring this bill forward for debate. Then they suddenly introduced a time allocation motion to speed it through. The government limited committee hearings to just two days here at Queen's Park. They didn't allow the committee to travel to hear from people who were impacted. They didn't allow the committee flexibility to sit late or to add more days to ensure that everyone who wanted to speak to this bill could be heard. They didn't allow the committee the flexibility to work together at committee to modify amendments to create something that would work for everyone and make this bill better.

I think it would be difficult to find anyone that would say that this is a good example of public participation. Presentations from the public were limited to just five minutes, so once again the members of the committee gave up their time for questions to members of the public who didn't have time to finish their presentations. I was happy to give up my time because during the hearings, I think it was more important to hear from the presenters than to hear ourselves speak.

The groups that came to speak to the bill all suggested ways that it could be improved. They pointed out unintended consequences. One mayor said, "Thanks for giving me the opportunity to meet with you today to provide input on Bill 52, which, if passed in its present form, will have a devastating effect on not only Atikokan, the community I come from, but also on many similar communities right across northern Ontario."

Another mayor said, "We seriously have an issue here with the bill as it is crafted, and there are amendments that we are proposing that we hope the committee will seriously consider to ensure that the premise and the original intention for the bill is met without creating another backdoor opportunity for large, well-funded organizations to drive their agendas, which unfortunately, in our view, is coming at the expense of northern Ontarians."

Another presenter said, "CRAND, as well as our friends from the Oxford Environmental Action Committee—who have attached a sheet I passed around for

you guys—both agree that there are four amendments that could really strengthen Bill 52...."

All of these people took the time to come to the committee to share their concerns and their suggestions for making this legislation better, but the government not only didn't put forward a single amendment to address those concerns, they blocked every amendment that our caucus put forward. It appeared that they didn't really want to listen to how this bill would impact groups, that they weren't prepared to work with either the opposition parties or the people and organizations that appeared at the committee. They don't appear interested in having a conversation that they once promised the people of Ontario.

But the members from this side of the House were listening. We heard about the impact of the forestry industry that already has lost close to 65 northern mills. We heard from numerous northern municipalities that were concerned that this bill, as written, would not accomplish its goal. In fact, they were worried that large organizations with vast resources could attack the forestry industry and would be shielded by this bill.

The forestry industry is a significant job creator in Ontario, and it's an important part of the northern economy. I think all three parties would agree that Ontario's forestry industry meets high standards. But when the industry association appeared at the committee to express their concerns, the government member informed them that this bill was created by an expert panel and showed no interest in working with the forest industry.

We put forward six amendments to this bill, including the one that the forest industry asked for. We listened to the people who took time to come to the committee and put forward amendments to make the bill work better.

This bill is the second bill that we've debated recently that will impact northern Ontario and the forestry industry. Last week, we had a time-allocated third reading debate on the Invasive Species Act. In both cases, the government refused to travel to northern Ontario or other regions to hear from people who would be impacted by the legislation. The people of northern Ontario, Mr. Speaker, deserve better. The people across Ontario that will be impacted by these bills deserve better. Protecting public participation shouldn't just be the title of a bill; it should be the job of this government, and right now it's a job that they aren't doing very well.

Yesterday at social policy committee we debated a subcommittee report that would have seen presentations on Bill 73, a bill which amends the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act, limited to just four minutes per presenter—four minutes for anyone to come in and talk about a bill that's going to completely rewrite and change the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act. Bill 73 is complex. The people who are coming forward to present can't even list their titles and qualifications in four minutes, Mr. Speaker, and that's all the time they would have had for their presentation.

I'm happy that we were able to make changes and extend the length to 15 minutes and add an additional

day. But I think we need to be worried about the trend towards shorter and shorter presentations. We need to really listen to people who want to provide information to make legislation better. That means giving them enough time to speak. It means being open to making changes, and sometimes it means that we need to bring the legislation and the committee to them. That's the only way we are actually going to have the conversation that this government promised and that's the only way that we are actually going to protect public participation, Mr. Speaker. I thank you very much for giving me these few minutes to put some comments on the record on this Bill 52.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'll just take a couple of minutes because I know that the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton is chomping at the bit to get in on this. I want to say how important this bill is to people down in my area, that it's all about the Save Ojibway land. Mr. Speaker, you know a lot about it because I've presented—myself and the member from Windsor West, with the full co-operation from the member from Essex—12,873 petitions on Save Ojibway, and also handed in well over 300 postcards to the minister.

There's a lady down our way, Nancy Pancheshan, who has been fighting a big-box proposal for lands behind the former Windsor Raceway and next to the Ojibway prairie nature reserve. The developer of that property, because it has gone to the OMB, is suing her personally for \$170,000, saying that her fight against the big-box proposal is vexatious—well, anything but. Nancy has gone out and hired, on her own, legal assistance; brought in environmental experts to the OMB; and just last week she put out over \$1,700 to rent a school bus to come up here with about 30 other people who wanted to be here for when the final petitions were presented—not the final petition, Speaker, because they're still coming into my office. The member for Windsor West and myself presented 8,743 last week.

I have to tell you, Speaker, that Nancy has a vision for a larger nature preserve, other than the big-box proposal that she has been fighting at the OMB, and it would be international in scope because Humbug Marsh is on the other side of the Detroit River, and that's the last mile of natural shoreline along the Detroit River. It's an international wildlife refuge, but when you come over to this side of the river you get into Ojibway Shores, Black Oak, Prairie, Tom Joy Woods and the Ojibway nature preserve. So there's a vision for a larger provincial park or federal nature preserve.

Nancy has been fighting for that, trying to say—and I was a member of city council when we did it—that we should never have approved the big-box proposal on the lands in question. She is not being vexatious at all. This is a true fight for the environmental community. There is no reason on earth to go after her for \$170,000 in legal fees from the developer, Speaker.

This bill should be passed and should be made retroactive, and we should be standing up and protecting the

environmental community and people like Nancy Pancheshan and making sure that they never have to face a lawsuit like this again, because she's doing it in the best interest of the community.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure, actually, to rise today to debate the Protection of Public Participation Act. I think it's an important piece of legislation that we not only did introduce in this assembly and, ultimately, pass—I think there is great merit to having a thoughtful discussion on how to best protect the freedom of speech in Canada, but also ensure that there are protections for people who may be libeled.

I'm in full support of this piece of legislation. When I look at, for example, the folks at Marineland, or a case that I'm much more familiar with, Esther Wrightman, who fought a wind turbine development in her constituency and is now being sued by a multi-million dollar conglomerate to take almost everything she has from her, both financially and emotionally, I think it's important that this assembly takes a stand and tells NextEra that that's unacceptable. It's inappropriate, and that level of bullying against a good Canadian, Ontario citizen is unacceptable. If the people from NextEra are listening to this today, I will call them "NextTerror"—which is why she's being sued. She's being sued because she called a wind turbine development company "NextTerror."

This woman has literally nothing left. It was her story, when I went to visit my colleague from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Monte McNaughton—when I met with his constituent Esther Wrightman, my blood boiled. I had never seen a case quite like this, where an individual, a mother, somebody fighting for her community, could be slapped down and slapped with a SLAPP case.

If there's one thing I can do in this Legislature today, it is to stand up for Esther Wrightman and the people like her in Ontario who deserve protection by legislation.

Now, the only thing I am concerned about, because I know Esther has already dealt with this SLAPP legislation, as have the folks at Marineland, is that there is no retroactivity clause here. I've mentioned that a few times in the Legislature, even posing questions to the government—because I will say this: the former Attorney General, a friend to many of us in this assembly, the former member from Kingston, John Gerretsen, had suggested that it was important in this particular case to have a retroactivity clause. Now there hasn't been, in my opinion, a good enough explanation for this. Some people will say you shouldn't have a retroactivity clause in a bill, but I think there are two very high-profile cases that I've just mentioned where I think it would help.

I understand and I appreciate the fact that there are members of this assembly who have some other concerns, because there are individuals who do abuse their abilities in the community to go after some companies that maybe are good job creators, that are working hard for their communities and have allowed for a good public

process, and who have legitimately been either slandered or libeled. I do understand that and I do appreciate it. I know that there are some divisions among this assembly on that particular issue. That said, it has not swayed me. My view has been from the beginning that this is a piece of legislation that should pass.

We in Ontario should not be looking at a young mother like Esther Wrightman as somebody who can be bullied by a major corporation because she's standing up for what she believes in.

The wonderful thing about this assembly—and why I decided to run for office, is I think it is incredible that the people of this province can actually do something. It was Margaret Mead who once said, in essence—I don't have the direct quote in front of me—never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed, those are the only people who ever have.

When I look across this great province, I look at the great city of Ottawa that I come from and the wonderful riding that I represent and the people who have stood up and have made change. Regardless of whether or not you agree with them when they make change, they've made it.

To be under constant threat for speaking your mind in the province of Ontario I think runs counter to the democracy that we practise, the freedom of press that we expect and the exchange of ideas that we cherish. When I look at, for example, this piece of legislation, I think it does require an impassioned plea.

I want to just read a little bit from Esther Wrightman. I'm going to start at the bottom of her letter. She sent a note to me and a couple of my colleagues, including the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. She said, "I'm sorry to say I'm entirely cynical about politics right now. I truly resent that politicians have the power to say whether I can have access to basic justice, on whim. Again, I realize the power is" there "but some support or recognition for those ... affected would have at least made the wound less painful for myself and ... others." I put that on the record to understand how important that retroactivity clause would be.

I'll go to the top here, because she's somebody that I've been quite taken with. She really believes—and she says that it's been "the end of line for me." She talks about some of the particular issues with Bill 52. She mentions, again, John Gerretsen.

I believe one of my colleagues, our critic Randy Hillier, also from eastern Ontario—his riding is very long, so you'll forgive me, Speaker, if I don't say the whole riding name—talked about Greenpeace. And Esther says this: "Many of us thought that at the very least a motion to reinstate the retroactivity would be brought forward. But nobody did.... We were left out in the cold. 'We' being myself, Marineland activists and maybe another one or two local opposition groups that are facing SLAPPs. I'm thinking it's doubtful the Greenpeace lawsuit would be considered a SLAPP, or at least not all of it."

She's just expressing her frustration. If there's one thing that we can count on as we move forward, it's

protection for people like Esther. But we can't protect Esther now as a result of the elimination of the retroactivity clause. That, to me, is very disappointing, and I say to Esther that I do apologize. I wish that we could have been her voice a bit stronger here, although we will be her voice as we move forward, which I suspect is a little consolation for her.

There have been many members who have been involved in this piece of legislation for quite some time, and I remember previous bills have been introduced. I believe the member from Scarborough Southwest—and I know the member from Ottawa Centre, who is now a minister, brought this forward. We've gone through a few critics over the years. I have now been elected, in March, 10 years, so I've seen this bill move forward on a number of occasions under different names and different ministers. So to those folks with their persistence, I want to congratulate them for that, because I think at the end of the day, while it isn't perfect for Esther, you're moving forward.

As my colleague from Oxford mentioned, he once was part of a SLAPP. I had some experience in discussing this publicly myself, because I don't believe that politicians or the public should be muzzled for their personal opinions if it is in a matter of the public interest. These are relatively rare instances but they can, in fact, be quite malicious and ruin people's lives. I don't think that it's appropriate that people that live in the province of Ontario should live in fear for discussing issues that are important to them and their neighbourhoods, particularly when it pertains to their children.

I think that, by definition, these SLAPP cases are unfounded, with little chance of success in a court of law. They end up going all the way down the line so people will continue to spend their money, so that they will be quiet, and then at the end they are thrown out, or after years and years of wrangling in the court system or with lawyers, it ends up getting thrown out.

From that perspective, I must say, I resent the fact that it needlessly bogs down our court system in this province when we actually have real offenders that we should be dealing with.

1650

I would say, as a Progressive Conservative, that this bill, which doesn't include a retroactivity clause, is a good start for protection of our citizenry and it's something that I will support. It's something I supported in the last reading, and I'm looking forward to this bill becoming royal assent so that SLAPP suits are not thrown around in the province of Ontario to shut down public discussion on matters of public interest.

At the end of the day, each of us stands in this assembly, and we stand in this assembly knowing we can say what we want in order to encourage a better society. We do so by going through elections every four years, or, if we have a minority government, even earlier than that. We do so because people fought for those freedoms, because our forefathers understood what a Constitution would be in order to protect those things. I think what we

need to do, and what we are doing, is extending that protection to Ontario citizens.

With that, I want to say thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's debate. I congratulate all of those who were for or against this bill for having a respectful dialogue along the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This bill is something absolutely important. It's something that New Democrats support. In fact, I want to draw attention to the fact that our leader raised this issue and introduced a bill to prevent SLAPP suits, an anti-SLAPP private member's bill, four years ago. Our leader showed leadership with respect to this issue, and we're very encouraged that the government has finally followed up, over four years later.

It's absolutely important that we protect the fundamental right of a democracy, which is the right to dissent. The ability to get up in a Parliament, to be able to stand on the streets, to be able to say loudly and clearly that you disagree with something, that you oppose something or that you have a different opinion is so fundamentally important to a democracy that it is something that we should protect at every opportunity.

This bill essentially, at its core, provides the courts with a quick dismissal mechanism. What that is is, if there is a lawsuit that has been initiated against an individual, if that lawsuit is initiated and it can be determined that that lawsuit is simply brought to silence that individual, if it can be shown that that lawsuit is frivolous or vexatious and has simply been brought for no other purpose but to discourage that individual from raising their voice, then that lawsuit can be dismissed and costs will be awarded to discourage those types of lawsuits in the future.

The courts have had to deal with these types of lawsuits. The courts have made a number of rulings, when there were these types of lawsuits, that were very clearly laid out. The judges were able to determine very quickly, once they actually heard the case in front of them, that there were simply no grounds to proceed with that lawsuit. The courts determined in a number of cases that these lawsuits were seemingly brought on purpose to silence the participation of particular individuals.

The government is moving on something that we've asked the government to move on, and we're encouraged by that. We're happy about that.

But it's important to make note that if someone does something that's either in writing, which is libel, or is in an oral capacity, speaking out loud, something that's defamatory, there is still a remedy for that. This law doesn't get rid of defamation, broadly speaking; it doesn't get rid of libel. Those two aspects of the law continue to exist. So if someone does have a legitimate claim that is not frivolous, not vexatious, not brought simply for the purpose of silencing someone, you can still bring that type of lawsuit. But in the myriad of examples that we've heard, and many people have shared their stories today, where someone in a community is

opposed to a particular development project which would undermine the fabric of that community or would not be in the best interests of that community, they can get up and say, "We oppose this project. We think this project will not be beneficial to our community. As residents of this community, we don't want this project to move forward." They can do that. If the developer, in that case, or if the municipality doesn't like what that person has to say and they initiate a lawsuit, this law will protect them. That's something we want to see happen. We want to see that protection.

As legislators, we need to protect the right of our citizens to participate. We talked earlier today about electoral boundary reforms and the idea that we need to encourage more voting and increase voter turnout. Similarly, we need to increase civic engagement in our communities. A vibrant community is made up of people who are engaged and are participating in that community. One of the most effective ways, one of the most important ways that people can be engaged is when it comes to public participation around issues that impact the community.

We've seen in the case of municipalities where community organizers have banded together to raise concerns and they've been hit with a lawsuit to stop them. What happens is, just receiving a letter that says that there will be a lawsuit in and of itself discourages people. It has a chilling effect. That makes people feel that they cannot raise their concerns because there is a certain fear of reprisal. The costs associated with legal action would deter people from participating. That's the exact opposite of what we'd like to see happen in society.

However, just as a note, while this bill does a great job of implementing the recommendations of the task force that was struck to address SLAPPs, the strategic lawsuits against public participation, and while it implements many of those recommendations, the letter scenario that I talked about—when you receive a letter from a lawyer saying that you will be sued or there will be a lawsuit initiated because of comments you've made—that letter itself, which is not actually a lawsuit, is not covered by this legislation. That's an area we need to look at as well. It's an area that was raised in debate in second reading, but the government did not move on this issue.

But it is important to note that, when the lawsuit is actually initiated, there are some very clear grounds to protect people and to protect public participation. We know there is at least one other jurisdiction in Canada, in Quebec, where this type of protection exists, and we've seen that it has certainly protected individuals and provided them with a recourse when there are vexatious lawsuits applied.

Let's focus on this point for a second: While the law does have an impact on the existing jurisprudence around defamation and libel, because the law does some significant things to change the way that defamation and libel lawsuits proceed, it doesn't preclude someone from bringing forward a genuine lawsuit. So in any situation—whether it's a private citizen, whether it's a company,

whether it's a municipality, whatever the body may be—if there is a genuine case of defamation, if there's a genuine case of libel, if someone blatantly says something or writes something that is completely false, that attacks the character of a particular organization or a person and does so in a public manner, and if it meets the definition of libel or defamation, you can still bring a lawsuit. It doesn't end that right.

Any company or any individual can still bring forward a lawsuit; however, it changes the existing law, the existing jurisprudence, and makes it, frankly, harder to bring a vexatious lawsuit. It makes it harder to bring a frivolous lawsuit. It makes it harder to bring a lawsuit that has no value. If a lawsuit has no value, shouldn't it be dismissed anyway? Doesn't that seem to just make sense? That's exactly what this law does. Again, it doesn't stop someone from bringing a lawsuit; it stops someone from bringing a frivolous lawsuit. If the criteria that are laid out in this legislation are satisfied to say that this lawsuit is vexatious, then it will be stopped.

1700

Now, there were a number of deputations in committee and many people came forward raising some very valid concerns. I want to take note that the government did not address any of those concerns through any amendments on the government side, so it's important to note that.

We've heard from a number of examples, and some of these examples were very troubling. One of the examples that came up in committee, which I think is important to share with the assembly here, is that in a city council, two councillors had the courage to raise concerns around the development of their city. The city was being developed in a manner that was too spread out, that was not building on the principles of intensification in order to build a livable city, and it was creating a sprawling city. So the two city councillors, duly elected representatives representing the concerns of their community, took a stance and said, "We don't want to see our city sprawled. We, instead, would like to see our city intensify in its development to ensure that we can create a city that's actually livable, so people can walk to their community centre or walk to their friend's house or walk to the local grocery store." They wanted to develop a community where you could ride your bicycle instead of having to drive your car—very valid concerns that they were elected to represent, concerns that they were elected to bring forward in council.

Simply for bringing forward these concerns around opposing a decision that would increase sprawl in their communities, these city councillors were sued. They were SLAPPed. They faced a lawsuit just because they said that they didn't want their city to sprawl out; instead, they wanted their city to intensify. These are city councillors. They're elected to do this. That's their job. Their job is to get up in their city council and to say, "Our constituents, the residents of this city, don't want to see our community sprawl. Instead, they want to see it intensify." And simply for doing their job, they were sued and they were effectively silenced.

But what was worse is, the other city councillors had made it clear that they were supportive of these two city councillors. They were going to support their initiative and thought that what they were saying made sense. When these two city councillors were SLAPPed, when they were hit with the lawsuit, it was on the eve of the vote on this issue of whether or not to approve a decision to sprawl the city or not. The vote that initially seemed to be going in the favour of these two city councillors that were in favour of intensification—the result of it was that they supported the sprawl instead of opposing it. What could be inferred from that is that the lawsuit not only silenced these two city councillors, but it may have actually impacted the other councillors as well.

I can't say forcefully enough how horrible a travesty that is. If a lawsuit cannot only impact two city councillors but also potentially change an entire vote and the direction that a city is headed in, that is absolutely unacceptable. Maybe if this protection was available to the city councillors, that type of lawsuit could have been easily dismissed and then perhaps might not have impacted the vote of the council. Anyway, that's an example of how important it is to protect public participation.

As stated before, in approximately 2010, our leader brought forward anti-SLAPP legislation. Recognizing that it's in the interest of the public to protect debate, to protect participation, she brought forward that bill and nothing happened with it. It was not supported and the bill did not go forward. At the time, there was a Liberal government and the bill did not see the light of day, nor did the government introduce a similar bill at that time. But again, it's very encouraging that the government is moving on this now.

Some of my colleagues have brought this issue up. It is worth mentioning that there is a certain irony to the government bringing a time allocation motion to a bill which talks about encouraging public participation and not allowing for strategic lawsuits against that. So it is somewhat ironic that the government did time-allocate a bill which is supposed to encourage debate; they discouraged debate. That is rather ironic and certainly worth mentioning.

I think it's important to focus on some of the criteria. The bill requires a lawsuit to establish a number of things. The lawsuit has to establish that there is merit, and the lawsuit has to be able to satisfy a number of criteria. One of those criteria is that there are actually grounds for the lawsuit, and that makes absolute sense. The grounds, as laid out by years and years of jurisprudence: There need to be grounds that the statement to meet the definition of defamation has to be publicly made, it has to be patently false, it has to be a statement that is not true, and it has to be a statement that can actually have a negative impact on the individual's character.

This bill also requires demonstrating that there is a loss associated with it. Not only do we want to see that there is impact to an individual's character, which was the law before, but there is a certain element that needs to

be satisfied with respect to the loss suffered. I think it's important, because a comment that's made in the interests of public participation that doesn't result in a loss to the individual should certainly be allowed. There should be a broad deference given to the idea of allowing public debate.

We also have a charter-defined or charter-protected right for freedom of expression. While there are limitations to the idea of freedom of expression—there is certain hate speech that we do not condone, nor should we condone, that can inflame animosity towards, perhaps, marginalized groups—in general, we need to support the principle of freedom of speech. It's something that's defined by our charter; it's a right that's protected by our charter. Similarly, in relation to that, if we have a right that's protected by the charter but there is no subsequent right to protect participation, that right rings quite hollow.

The idea of protecting public participation flows very naturally from the idea of a society that protects freedom of expression—should also protect that expression if it does touch on a sensitive topic, if it does touch on something that is in the public interest. There may be people who don't like that expression. There might be people who have a vested interest in not allowing that type of expression. It is incumbent on the Legislature, on the assembly, to protect that expression.

I am reminded of a number of circumstances where people have raised concerns. We know that there are municipal examples. There are also animal rights advocates who talked about the welfare of animals. They faced a strategic lawsuit simply for raising concerns around the well-being of an animal. Again, raising concerns around the well-being of an animal is something that they should be able to do. They should be entitled to do so. As long as the concerns are made in the interests of public participation and they are concerns that are truthful, they should be supported and they should be protected. When they're not protected, that's inappropriate.

Again, we don't condone false comments being made, comments that are made simply to forward an interest. Those things can still be covered by the existing law. The law would allow for a defamation or a libel suit to be brought if it's proven to be or shown to be that the comments are not truthful. So people have protection. This is a balanced bill. It balances in favour of encouraging more public participation, and in doing so it does the right thing.

Just to touch on—I've said this before in the House and I think I should focus on it again: why it's so important to protect the right to dissent. In our democracy, we talk about a number of rights that we have. One of the rights we have is the right to vote. While voting is absolutely important—it's one of our ways of exercising our rights in a democracy—it's really in the dissent that we find the true hallmarks of a democracy. If we compare and contrast societies which are free, there may be societies where there are elections, and those elections

are held under conditions which are not something that we would determine to be free. The key difference between a free and democratic society is that ability to stand up and oppose the existing government, to be able to say, "I disagree with the government's policies," or "I disagree with issues that are going on in my community." That ability to get up and say "I disagree" is what actually signifies a truly free society.

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Where you can't get up and disagree—where disagreeing with the state puts you in jail, where disagreeing with the state causes you to face significant financial repercussions—that's not truly a free society. That's why the ability to disagree, to have dissent, to have an opinion voiced—an opinion voiced that may be controversial, an opinion that may not be welcomed by certain individuals—is so important to protect, because it's really the bedrock of our democracy, that ability to disagree. That's essentially what this bill does.

There were a number of experts who were on the expert panel that discussed the importance of this bill. When looking at the various cases that had been determined to be frivolous, one of the most important elements that the panel came up with was being able to dismiss the action quickly. Why that's so important is, we've seen that cases in the legal system can be drawn out. One of the problems with our legal system is that it is quite slow. Often cases take years and years and years to complete, and that's when you actually want your case to complete.

Now, in the case of a strategic lawsuit designed to deter public participation, the initiator of that lawsuit has a vested interest in ensuring that the lawsuit takes as long as possible to get to a resolution. In fact, they don't want the lawsuit to get to a resolution. It's the sword of Damocles, it's the threat of that lawsuit, which is actually the deterrent. So judges saw that cases that were finally determined to be frivolous were taking years and years to process through the court system, and it was years and years of legal costs that deterred individuals from speaking again. It was years and years of the case hanging over one's head that discouraged future participation and had a chilling effect on other individuals who saw their colleagues being faced with a multi-million dollar lawsuit and decided not to then engage in public participation.

It's the length of time, essentially, that acted as the major deterrent, so the early dismissal mechanism proposed by this bill is really the key element in ensuring that we have public participation. When you can quickly determine that a case meets the criteria of early dismissal, that case can be brought before a judge, and when the conditions are met, the judge can make an efficient ruling and immediately dismiss the case.

Now, while there aren't a whole host of these types of frivolous lawsuits in the court system already, one of the benefits of this law is that it will reduce some of the burden in our already burdened court system. Allowing courts to quickly address cases that can be assessed early on as being vexatious will free up court time for other

cases, and we know that's certainly an issue in our justice system. Whether it's criminal justice or Family Court, we know that cases are taking too long to proceed or to eventually be resolved, and far too often cases are being resolved based on a violation of section 11 rights, which is the right to be tried within a reasonable time, rather than on the merits of the case itself.

While obviously we support the right to have your trial within a reasonable time, there is a public interest in ensuring that cases are heard on their merits, heard on their grounds, and decided one way or the other based on the actual law as applied to the facts of the case. When we have delays in the court system resulting in section 11 applications, we know that there is clearly a problem with the existing system. So one of the corollary benefits of this law will be that it will provide a mechanism to dismiss cases and that it might be able to free up some of the burden and some of the caseload in our court system.

We have, in general, heard from a number of members in this House who have all spoken to how important public participation is and have all spoken to personal experiences in their communities where people were faced with strategic lawsuits. One of our colleagues himself was faced with a SLAPP suit. That's something that's a real concern. That's why I think it's a great initiative that we have a law that will ensure that those types of lawsuits don't happen again.

This law has been introduced a number of times by this government. I want to just point out, while we're at third reading now, that this is a great sign that we're going to have this law in Ontario. We'll be one of the early adopters in the country in having a law of this type that actually protects public participation.

This law could have been brought to fruition or brought to this stage a lot earlier if the government had prioritized this bill. Bills of this nature, which don't cost government anything but are the right thing to do, should receive appropriate priority. It's been far too long for this bill to actually get to this point. In the future, with respect to other bills that are as significant, as important, that don't cost our system and, in fact, would free up costs out of the system, I encourage the government to prioritize them appropriately. It has taken far too long for this bill to get to where it is right now.

Again, New Democrats support the anti-SLAPP legislation. Our leader brought forward this type of legislation years ago. We will proudly support the bill as it stands.

In closing, it is important to note that there were a number of issues that did arise in committee and people did bring forth some great amendments. Those amendments were not brought out by the government, so I want to make note of that as well. But this is certainly a win for democracy. This is certainly a win for the right to dissent, and I'll be proud to vote in favour of this when the bill comes up for the final vote very shortly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House, dated Tuesday, June 2, 2015, I am now required to put the question.

Madame Meilleur has moved third reading of Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I wish to inform the House that I have received a request for a deferral of this vote under standing order 28(h), that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to thank you for doing double duty this afternoon. You have House duty for our caucus and you're also filling in the chair. You're doing a great job.

Interjection: A talented man.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yes, we're often asked to multi-task in this place, as we know, and you're doing that, too, today, and I appreciate that.

Certainly when this bill was last debated, I believe on October 8, as the official opposition critic to the Minister of Labour, I had the floor. Of course, the standing orders of the House provide for an hour-long leadoff speech by the opposition critics, and so I've had, I think, about 35 minutes to debate and respond to the minister's presentation on Bill 109, this important government legislation, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act.

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I would remind the House that this was first introduced in the House on May 28, 2015. Really, there hasn't been a great deal of media coverage or a great deal of debate yet in this House about this bill, but certainly, as it moves forward, we're learning more and more about what the government intends to do with this particular

piece of legislation. We know that this bill, in schedule 1, would seek to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; in schedule 2 of the bill, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997—that, again, would be amended by this bill, if passed; and schedule 3 of the bill is an amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

I would reiterate, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of our caucus, that we, indeed, support fair labour laws in the province of Ontario; we always have. We believe that there needs to be a balance which respects the rights of workers as well as the needs of employers, and we need to grow the economy and work together to create new, good-paying jobs. That, I believe, is an important obligation of all of us in this Legislature and, obviously, the provincial government as well. The government doesn't necessarily create jobs, but it can, in fact, create the conditions and the economic climate whereby private sector companies will want to create new jobs. That is something we continue to advocate in this Legislature as the official opposition.

We see, day to day, many examples where the government is not taking the appropriate steps to encourage private sector job creation, such that our unemployment rate in the province of Ontario continues to be unacceptably high, hovering around 7%. The youth unemployment rate is probably double that: on average, it's probably 14% to 15%—a whole generation of young people who are looking for that first career-track job, coming out of college, high school or university, and, unfortunately, not getting the breadth of job opportunities that many of us had in previous generations. Obviously, that's something that should concern all of us. It concerns me, and I think it should concern all of us in this House. I know that our opposition is very concerned about it.

We would say that we need to strengthen Ontario's competitiveness so that we can win in the global economy. We've seen recently, at least, the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade agreement that was negotiated by a number of Pacific countries. Recently, the initial phase was concluded. Countries have signed on to it, but, at the same time, we look to see what the new federal government under Justin Trudeau is going to do to respond to it. We certainly know that we have to ensure that Ontario has a competitive economy so that we can compete and win in the new global economy.

I'll also say that, with respect to Bill 109, our party values highly the work that is done by our firefighters. They are highly trained, highly skilled professionals, and their courage is on display day to day. They are prepared to risk their lives to keep the rest of us safe. Again, I don't think we say thank you often enough to our professional firefighters, as well as our part-time firefighters in rural Ontario, which we used to call volunteer firefighters. In many cases, I would acknowledge that they are being paid either an hourly rate or an honorarium, but most of them have other full-time jobs or part-time jobs. A lot of their spare time is spent devoted to improving public safety in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, you know, as a former volunteer firefighter yourself for many years, the work that goes into preparing for the emergencies and the training that's required. Any of us who are privileged to represent small-town ridings could go into our fire halls on any Saturday and find them a very busy beehive of activity, where there's a lot of people there working on ensuring that the equipment is clean and ready and whatever has to be done to prepare. Certainly, the training component is significantly time-consuming, and so there's a huge commitment on the part of our part-time volunteer fire service, as well as the full-time service.

I would say that the changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act—we acknowledge and we were told—have been developed in consultation with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and I think those changes, from what I've seen and what I've heard to date, seem reasonable.

The changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, we believe, Mr. Speaker, require more public discussion. We would ask and suggest that the bill, if indeed it passes second reading in this Legislature, be referred to a standing committee of the House and that we should have reasonable public hearings.

I would say to you, Mr. Speaker, that I don't think giving deputants four minutes to make a presentation is a reasonable opportunity for public hearings. Surely the government wants to be seen to be engaging in public hearings on some of these pieces of legislation. They want to be able to have the minister stand up in the House and in public statements outside this place to claim and state that they are having public hearings, but in fact it's not a serious effort to listen to the public if they are prepared to only allow four minutes for deputants. If they're only prepared to allow deputants six minutes, it's not acceptable. If they are only prepared to allow deputants eight minutes, clearly that is unacceptable to our side of the House. I know you share that view, Mr. Speaker, in the work that you have done on the issues that are under your responsibility.

Obviously, if we're going to listen to people, we have to give them a reasonable opportunity to present their views in a public process at a standing committee of the Legislature. When I was first elected, that meant half an hour for organized groups that had credibility and spoke for large numbers of people. That's the way it should be done. There should be a reasonable period of time. You can't expect organizations—especially when you're just having the hearings in Toronto and limiting the hearings outside of Toronto—to send their representatives here for four to six minutes or eight minutes. It's just ridiculous. It's preposterous on the surface of it. So again, I would suggest that there has to be a better opportunity for groups and individuals that are interested in this bill than just to have their views cut off, if we're going to engage in hearings that are actually and truly meaningful.

Once again, schedule 1 is the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. It is, we're told, incorporating significant

portions of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, including provisions against unfair labour practices, membership in associations, and expedited rights arbitration.

We're told that the bill will permit associations to require the inclusion of closed-shop language in a collective agreement with features such as mandatory association dues, deductions, and provisions requiring membership in the association or giving preference of employment to members of an association.

We're told that these powers are balanced by rights for firefighters as well. For example, expelled or suspended members or those who have been denied membership in an association will be protected on certain grounds, such as in a case of reasonable dissent. This will allow, we're told—and we believe—two-hatters, or double-hatter firefighters, to continue their volunteer work without fear of reprisal.

I'll have a little bit more to say about that in a few minutes, Mr. Speaker. I know that you recall that issue probably as vividly as I do, going back to the discussions that we had in this House with respect to a private member's bill that I introduced in the year 2002, some 13 years ago, and the ongoing discussion on Bill 30 that took place at that time. I know that some of the New Democrats who are here right now perhaps weren't in the House in 2002, but some of the New Democrats were and would remember it as well. Again, if there's time, certainly I'll continue that explanation of what happened in those days.

Bill 109 will allow labour disputes under this act to be heard by the Ontario Labour Relations Board, as opposed to an Ontario court. Assuming that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has the resources and has the—they do have the expertise, obviously, Mr. Speaker, and I think the specialized experience, but assuming they have the resources, hopefully that will free up our court system and ensure that disputes can be heard and discussed and resolved in a fair manner, in a more timely way, and again freeing up court resources for other issues that need to be resolved through our court system, because I know there's obviously a resource issue there.

Under Bill 109, firefighters would be able to opt out of union membership or even opt out of paying union dues if being a member conflicts with their religious beliefs. That's something that I think needs to be acknowledged.

We're told that the changes found in schedule 1 will apply retroactively in some cases.

Now, in schedule 2 of the bill, different issues are being raised with the amendments to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997. In this case, Bill 109 is seeking to address problems arising from public sector workplaces where the employees are represented by two or more unions. These issues typically arise in cases of restructuring of organizations. For example, if there is an amalgamation of two, say, public sector employers and both of those workplaces had previously been unionized, there has to be some sort of a resolution as to which union is going to be organizing and representing those employees going forward.

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Currently, there are situations and cases where a workplace is represented by two or more unions, as I said, and there must be a vote to determine which union will represent all employees going forward. But Bill 109 would change that to create a threshold by which the union will be automatically chosen in cases such as the ones I've just described. Bill 109 most likely would establish that threshold at 60%, from what I've been told, but I think that may require a regulation as well to further define that actual threshold. For example, again, in a case where one union represents 65% of the members in an organization that has come together and a second union represents the other 35% of them, currently the employees would have to have an opportunity to vote in the case of restructuring. However, under Bill 109, the first union that I described would automatically be named the bargaining agent.

I know that that is somewhat controversial, even within the labour unions themselves. I think those unions should have an opportunity to speak at a standing committee to discuss their concerns, to explain to it members so that we better understand (a) what's happening out there and (b) what the respective unions think should happen. Then, we have to apply a test of judgment to determine fairness in that. But again, I think they should be given an opportunity—and I would say again, they should be given more opportunities to speak to this bill than, say, four minutes or six minutes or even eight minutes. Obviously, we have to show respect for the deputants in that regard. They should be given a greater opportunity to present their views so that members can truly understand what they're saying.

I would also add that I think it's important to recognize that the time allocated at standing committees for deputants should be considered their time. For us to be imposing on them specific minutes when the parties can ask questions and, in fact, again, having the effect of restricting the time available that the deputants have to make their presentations—surely that's not fair. We should be willing to respect the fact that it is their time, not our time, if they're coming in and making the effort and making a presentation. Many of the issues and the discussion could take place amongst the members of the committee at the clause-by-clause stage when we get to that.

Also, as we know, Mr. Speaker, from your long experience in the Legislature, what often happens in the case of public hearings after a deputant makes a presentation is, quite often, there's an exodus of members who will leave the room for a moment and go out and chat with them afterwards. Business cards are exchanged, discussion takes place and further follow-up takes place after the committee hearings. We really need to respect the opportunity that our deputants have, give them the chance to make their presentations and not arbitrarily restrict the time that they have available to make their presentations.

Again, schedule 3 of this bill, amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997: First and

foremost, schedule 3 of Bill 109 prevents employers from prohibiting or discouraging their employees to file with the WSIB or from influencing or inducing workers to withdraw previously submitted claims. What I think the government is trying to say here is that employers should not be trying to coerce or even counsel their employees not to make a claim with respect to WSIB if indeed they've been injured on the job. The government, I think, is saying in some cases that has happened. They may have some evidence. I'd like to hear more about that. I don't think we had very much in the way of evidence from the minister or his parliamentary assistant when they led off the debate. If, indeed, that is happening—it's possibly happening, I'm not saying it's not, but I'd like to see more empirical evidence that it is happening and to what extent it's happening, before we just automatically assume that employers are doing this in a systematic or a repeated way.

The bill would ensure that there is a new monetary penalty, the amount to be determined later on by regulation, which would apply on top of any fine applicable by an Ontario court. The penalty applicable to a person who is not an individual is increased by this bill. Again, the penalty for someone who counsels or tries to coerce an employee who has been hurt on the job from not reporting it to the WSIB, under Bill 109, would increase from \$100,000 to \$500,000—so, obviously, a substantial increase in the penalty to send a message; a quintupling of the current penalty level.

Under Bill 109, WSIB death benefits would no longer be calculated based on a statutory minimum per year. Instead, it would be based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade, job or profession at the time of their death. I understand this schedule would apply retroactively to any cases since January 1, 1998.

Finally, this bill would create the role of a so-called fair practices commissioner to be appointed by the board to serve as an ombudsman for the WSIB. We look to the government to explain more so what the responsibilities of that particular new officer will be. An ombudsman for the WSIB is certainly—over the years that I've been privileged to serve in the Legislature, we have received countless complaints about the WSIB and its predecessor, the Workers' Compensation Board. In fact, it used to be probably the number one complaint in my office during the years 1990 to 1995, when the New Democrats were in power and I was first serving in the Legislature in opposition.

I recall that when the new government took office in 1995, new staff were hired to lead the WSIB and a new board was put in place. I recall Glen Wright being the chair of the board. In fact, I think they made significant improvements in terms of customer service to both employers and employees, because, actually, I think the complaints to my office went down considerably. Through the years, complaints have gone up and down. Obviously, as an MPP, and my staff, we who work hard to go to bat for our constituents on every issue that's brought to our attention, including the WSIB—we've not

interfered in the appeals process and the appeals tribunal, but until a decision is made, certainly we're trying to ensure that the WSIB staff, and the claims adjudicators, have all the information that the worker has. Sometimes, quite frankly, there have been instances where it appears that injured workers who have contacted our office had fallen through the cracks, and so we're trying to help them in any way we can, in an appropriate way.

I would also say that the appointment of Elizabeth Witmer as the new chair of the WSIB back in April 2012, and some of the new board appointments, I think have given the board a very strong new leadership team. David Marshall, who has been the CEO for some time, and his senior staff—I think they've had a mandate to improve the WSIB's administration and, also, I believe, to work to reduce the unfunded liability of the WSIB. I think the most recent number I've seen, it has been reduced—

Interjection: Unfunded.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —the unfunded liability—I believe it's down to \$8.9 billion, which is a significant improvement.

I think we should all be concerned about the WSIB's unfunded liability and we should all support efforts to have a plan, a workable plan, to reduce it to zero, actually. Injured workers have an interest in ensuring that the unfunded liability is reduced, because, obviously, the unfunded liability represents the WSIB's inability to pay its long-term commitments relative to the income stream that comes from premiums from employers.

Obviously, employers want to see the unfunded liability reduced as well, because if it's not—if the WSIB is not being managed properly and if, indeed, the unfunded liability is increasing—employers see that as a possible increase in their premiums over time. We know that WSIB premiums is a substantial payroll cost for employers. Payroll costs are already very high in the province of Ontario, and as payroll costs increase, job creation is reduced, because companies look for other ways to get things done. In some cases, higher payroll costs, and even the threat or the belief that higher payroll costs are coming, inhibit job creation in the province. In fact, when I've had discussions with small business people about the pending Ontario Retirement Pension Plan that the government has talked about, many small businesses are very, very concerned about that and they're saying to me, "I'd like to hire new people, but I'm afraid to hire new people because I know that this is coming and it's going to increase my payroll costs dramatically." Of course, employees should be concerned about that too, because it represents, once it comes into effect, an immediate, substantial reduction in their take-home pay.

1740

We know that many of the people who are probably most concerned about not having saved enough for their retirement, and perhaps on the surface would be most excited about a new provincial pension plan, are people perhaps in their fifties and sixties who are close to retirement age and feel either they haven't made ad-

equate provision for their retirement or really haven't saved enough. In some cases, they've saved a lot, but they really don't believe they have enough to retire. Those people, I would acknowledge, are anxious about whether or not they have enough money to retire, concerned about what they're going to do when they have to retire, hoping that a new provincial Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is going to help. We know that those people who are close to retirement—who are only going to be working for a couple of more years, let's say—are not going to benefit very much at all from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. It is only those who have paid into it over, say, a 30-year working life who will receive a substantial benefit.

Quite frankly, the government, I think, is going to be quite surprised, if indeed they go ahead with this, at the disappointment that they're going to hear from people when people were led to believe that this is going to be a great benefit to them, when in fact, if they only work for a few years leading up to retirement, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is going to give them a pittance. Of course, they're going to be pretty disappointed about the expectations that have been created by the government. I put that on the record somewhat as an aside, but it deals with payroll issues, and WSIB issues are payroll issues, too, Mr. Speaker.

I am aware, and I've been advised, that the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association is in favour of this bill in its entirety. In fact, they believe they have been consulted adequately and have helped to craft the bill, so I would acknowledge that.

But I also think it's important to point out that OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, is against provisions of Bill 109, and they have said so. They are particularly opposed to section 2. If indeed OPSEU is opposed to this bill, then as far as I'm concerned, they should be given an opportunity to speak at public hearings, to explain why they're concerned, to suggest possible amendments and improvements, to engage the members in this discussion and debate, and to allow the MPPs who are on that committee to hear their concerns, make a decision as to whether or not they're valid and take the concerns forward into the third reading debate, if need be. OPSEU argues that the proposed amendments will water down an employee's democratic right to choose their bargaining agent.

We have also heard from respected experts on WSIB issues who have expressed concerns on the WSIB changes in Bill 109, suggesting that the bill is seeking a resolution to a problem that does not even exist. Independent research, I'm told, shows that the malicious employer that the government would have us believe is out there is actually non-existent in Ontario. The WSIB's internal research, I'm told, also shows that there is no evidence of abuse by employers. That's something that I think, again, we need to discuss at committee. I alluded to that earlier: If there is empirical evidence that suggests there are employers out there who are either counselling or coercing employees not to report an injury that has

taken place to the WSIB, I'd like to hear more about that. The government would have us believe that it's a big problem. Let's hear more empirical evidence—as well as any anecdotal evidence the government would like to put forward; I would be interested in hearing that, too.

Again, I wanted to go back to the issue that I mentioned earlier, the two-hatter issue. I had a chance to speak previously, as I said, on October 8, and I read some testimony—I'm running out of time unfortunately—from the committee hearings that took place in October 2002 when we had committee hearings on my Bill 30.

I read extensively, in my previous opportunity in this speech, from the testimony at the Standing Committee on Justice and Social Policy on October 21, 2002, from the fire marshal of Ontario, but I want to add that there was also support for my bill from a number of other very credible organizations in the fire service, including the Ontario fire chiefs' association, representing chiefs from all over the province, and including city fire departments—full-time, professional fire services, as well as the part-time or volunteer services. They were very supportive of my bill and supportive of legislated protection for two-hatter firefighters, so that their expulsion from the union and the threat of that couldn't be held over them, forcing them to quit as part-time firefighters.

I wanted to read comments from the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs. They were very supportive of the bill. We also had support from the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, representing the volunteer fire service.

I said previously that if indeed this protects two-hatters, this Bill 109, it is good news in terms of public safety for rural Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The Chair recognizes the member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: The member from Wellington-Halton Hills did a good job on explaining this bill. It's an interesting bill in that, in some ways, it is a housekeeping bill, and some of those housekeeping types of issues would bring the firefighters in this province in line with other workers in the province with respect to the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

But in other ways, it's a very regressive bill that actually, I think, wouldn't withstand a charter challenge at the end of the day with respect to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, where it's going to actually take away the rights of workers who are unionized when two hospitals come together or two municipalities come together—that stuff that arose under Mike Harris.

In the case where workers had less than 40% of the members—say it was a competition between OPSEU and CUPE, for example, if 39.9% of the workers only belong to CUPE, those CUPE members would have no right to choose which union they would belong to, which really flies in the face of the legislation to begin with. But people in a non-union setting competing with a union on the other side would still be going to a vote, whether they had 40% or less or more. So it seems to me that this isn't a very progressive move. Certainly the people that I've

talked to in my labour portfolio are not supportive of this legislation.

I'll have an hour tomorrow to talk more about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further questions or comments?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: It's always my pleasure to be able to rise in this House and make some comments in relation to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills's presentation to the House and, of course, talk a little bit about the importance of Bill 109.

I know the member from Wellington–Halton Hills talked quite a bit about the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. This Bill 109 is actually going to amend three separate acts that are affecting workers to increase fairness and efficiency. Changes under this bill, if it becomes law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario. I think the first thing I'd like to mention—I think my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills talked about this a bit as well—is that we're helping to provide fair, just and efficient workers' compensation systems.

The second thing that this bill really does is it ensures that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible through greater efficiency and stability.

I think another important thing to mention is that it provides more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector. I know I can think of SPFFA local 527 in Sudbury. The association president, Rob Hyndman, and Captain Chad Whitmore are great people within our community who do so much.

I think it's great for us to ensure that we're giving all of our local police services right across our great province the protection that they need, because, Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware, day in and day out, the men and women in uniform do a great job of keeping us safe. For us to be able to bring forward legislation that continues to help protect them, those who protect us, is an important thing.

I'd just like to thank my honourable colleagues for their presentations and being part of this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The Chair recognizes the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for filling in today to give the member from Wellington–Halton Hills the opportunity to finish speaking on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act.

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We know that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills is always doing a great job on behalf of his constituents. He's kind of a legend for part of this bill, the section on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Even before I got to Legislature in 2002, the member—a different riding name back then—introduced a private member's bill, Bill 30. That was to allow full-time firefighters—in my case, in the city of Kawartha Lakes, I had Tim Lee. He was a full-time firefighter in another municipality, but he wanted to volunteer and help out his community in Kawartha Lakes, which was the right thing to be doing. The unions were very much against it and

were pressuring him; he was threatened that he was going to lose his job.

When the member from Wellington–Halton Hills introduced his private member's legislation, the double-hatters legislation, to protect the full-time firefighters who were in a different jurisdiction but wanted to volunteer back in their home communities, it was interesting that the Liberals defeated his private member's bill at that time.

We come full circle, as the member from Wellington–Halton Hills—have you been here long enough? You've come full circle. The Liberals are actually introducing a piece of legislation that does allow for volunteer firefighting if you're a full-time firefighter in some other jurisdiction. I just wanted to commend Tim Lee, who had the courage to stand up to his union and say, "Hey, but what about my community?" So to commend all those volunteer firefighters back home that were full-time somewhere else but wanted to contribute to their community—hopefully, we're getting it right now, and that will make it better for everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further comments? The Chair recognizes the member for Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm nimble this late in the afternoon. It's a pleasure to join the debate on any occasion, particularly one that deals with labour statutes and amendments to labour law. My colleague the member from Welland, who is now our party's critic for labour, articulated quite well some of the pitfalls of this bill, certainly around disenfranchising those who are seeking to organize their operations, workers who are ready to organize—if there is a consolidation of two entities that come together and the rights that are integral or rights that are given to those bargaining units—something that, quite clearly, may not withstand a charter challenge.

It would be our counsel to the government and to opposition to really put some focus on at least eliminating the parts of the bill that certainly would not withstand that. You put a lot of work into these bills. There's a lot of time that goes into debating the bills. Let's make sure that the bill is in order, in the first place, so that we're not wasting anyone's time. That can be done quite easily and should be done quite easily. It sort of begs the question: Is this bill intended to actually address some of the issues in our labour law or to play politics, knowing full well that it will never have the chance to see the light of day?

We certainly support debating reforms to employment standards and labour standards. There are so many other facets out there. My first bill dealt with some facets of labour law that would have made it easier for workers to certify, giving them more rights in their workplaces. That did, unfortunately, die. I'm hopeful to see it resurrected at some point in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills now has two minutes to wrap up.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I should say, again, thank you for filling in in the chair

this afternoon so that I could finish off my remarks on Bill 109. I want to express my appreciation to the members who responded to my remarks. They all raised, I think, pertinent points that need to be considered in the context of this debate as it continues.

The member for Kawartha Lakes-Brock reminded the House that actually, to a large degree, the two-hatters issue emerged as an issue in her area. It was a professional firefighter named Tim Lee who wanted to volunteer as a part-time or volunteer firefighter in his home community, using his skills and expertise that he had learned over the course of his career and putting that to good use on his days off in his home community so that he could protect his own family, as well as his neighbours—again, on his free time or time off. It was he who was challenged by the union at that time and told that if, indeed, he continued to serve as a part-time firefighter in his home community, he might be expelled from the union, and if he was expelled from the union, he might lose his full-time job with the professional fire service that he was also with, and really calling into question his livelihood.

That example was one of the ones that we talked about during the debates on Bill 30. Tim had the courage of his convictions to take a public stand. Again, I salute him for his willingness to stand up, because at the time, the professional fire service was trying to bury this issue, and, in many cases, they pretended it wasn't even happening, and would suggest that. We knew it was happening, so we continued to work on it.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, the bill came to a final vote in the House in December 2002, and the Liberal opposition, with a couple of exceptions—but the vast majority of them voted against it. Two thirds of our caucus, on a free vote, voted for it. But because of the combined opposition of the Liberals and the New Democrats and some of, quite frankly, the Conservative members, it was defeated. But here we are today, discussing the issue again, and again I would say this is a good day for public safety in rural Ontario if, indeed, the government is committed to protecting two-hatter firefighters with a legislated solution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has given notice of dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given today on the youth jobs program by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today in question period, I asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to address the issue of drastic cuts made to the Jobs for Youth Program that provides at-risk youth employment opportunities in the Manitoulin and La Cloche areas. Unfortunately, I received a less than satisfactory response.

In August, the district services board received word from the ministry that funding would be drastically cut. I wanted to hear from the minister and the ministry what he was doing to help unemployed and disadvantaged youth find work in northern communities. I didn't hear that. Basically, what I heard was rhetoric. I didn't hear anything about the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board. I didn't hear anything to the faintest of the subject of my question.

Funding to the Jobs for Youth Program has been cut by 83% since its inception. The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board and its 18-member municipality sent a letter to the Premier stating the “need to understand how the ministry can reduce the number of youth placements from 111 ... to 19....” The program provided youth aged 15 to 18 with the equivalent of eight weeks of full-time work with local employers before funding was cut. The allocation for Manitoulin and La Cloche is now for seven youths, a reduction from 58, or an 88% cut in placements.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board received a letter on August 14, 2015, confirming the funding allocation and site targets for the Youth Job Connection program. In this same letter, their organization was asked to accept the funding to deliver both components of the program: Youth Job Connection from October 2015 to March 2017 and Youth Job Connection: Summer program from April 2016 to March 2017. The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board has been overseeing the Jobs for Youth Program, formerly known as the Summer Jobs for Youth, since 2008, funded by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

This program allocated the funding for Jobs for Youth since its inception to the district services board for Manitoulin Island only. Since the inception of this program, the district services board continued to lobby the ministry for the allocation for the remainder of the district.

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The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board has the resources available to ensure that the Jobs for Youth Program is well delivered in each part of the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board has always reinvested any central administration dollars back into the program to ensure that as many at-risk youth as possible have the opportunity for a summer job.

The Jobs for Youth Program is an initiative of the youth opportunities strategy, which was established to address the factors that place youth at increased risk of engaging in anti-social behaviour and/or violence. The

eight-week program is intended to give disadvantaged youth, any youth who resides in identified at-risk communities, an opportunity to develop employment skills and obtain safe and positive employment experience through paid summer employment and thereby participating in and contributing to the betterment of their families and communities.

That means there will be 92 high-risk youth who will not get an opportunity for a summer job in 2016 because of the change in the province's programming for high-risk youth.

The district services board has requested a delegation at AMO to discuss the issue with Minister Moridi. They didn't receive a response. They didn't receive a return call. They didn't receive anything. It's imperative to set up a meeting with the district services board, and not with the youth organizations as the minister responded to this morning in the question, to discuss the drastic reductions in services in an area that was identified by the province as high-risk.

My question once again to the minister is: When can they expect to receive a call that you will agree to meet with them to justify the cuts you have made to this program?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am pleased to recognize the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the member for Trinity-Spadina. He has five minutes to reply.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his question, and I'm pleased to answer, or try to answer his question, on behalf of the minister.

Ensuring that our young people have opportunities to contribute to our economy is a top priority for our government. Building on past success with youth employment programming, our government is investing an additional \$250 million over two years in Ontario's renewed youth jobs strategy. As part of our 2015 budget, this renewed strategy will be driven by two new, innovative youth programs.

Youth Job Connection will provide intensive support to youth facing multiple barriers to employment, including at-risk youth, aboriginal youth, newcomers and youth with disabilities.

Youth Job Link, which will be launched in spring 2016, will assist students and youth to access labour market information and job search resources, including summer employment placements.

This new investment will serve over 150,000 young Ontarians and Canadians and focus on skills development, labour market connections, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Our government is moving forward with our renewed youth jobs strategy to help young people gain the right skills and experience to achieve their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting Ontario's most vulnerable youth access the necessary services and tools to find jobs in today's market economy.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is consistently evaluating employment and training programs to avoid duplication and to ensure that all services are built on best practices.

Through a series of consultations, the ministry heard from many stakeholders that youth programming should be more targeted and cover a wider spectrum of young people. That is why we are introducing a new, more comprehensive and targeted suite of employment programs and services to help youth with a broad spectrum of needs.

I want to reassure the member that youth on Manitoulin Island and across the province will continue to have access to a variety of employment supports, including summer job opportunities, through a suite of new programs that build on the best practices of programs like Jobs for Youth, previously offered by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. These include Youth Job Connection, which is providing more than \$160 million over two years to help youth facing multiple barriers to employment. Youth Job Link will be launching in spring 2016 and will help youth who face fewer barriers to employment.

Through Ontario's Youth Job Connection, youth will have access to paid pre-employment training, job matching, mentorship services and education and work transition supports. The program will be delivered through Employment Ontario and consist of two components, the first being a year-round component which helps youth aged 15 to 29, and a summer job component that will provide high school students aged 15 to 18 with summer job opportunities and part-time work during the school year. Youth Job Connection is a targeted program to help youth who need the most help to find jobs. That is available at more than 130 Employment Ontario locations across the province.

In selecting service providers, the ministry uses targeted, evidence-based analysis that ensures adequate service coverage across the province. The selection process includes an analysis of geography, labour market information, demographic characteristics and the service provider capacity. Three times as many service providers have been invited to deliver Youth Job Connection, including those currently offering Jobs for Youth.

This program will continue to provide a similar service at all former Jobs for Youth sites, so there will be no gaps in services for youths on Manitoulin Island, in the surrounding area and across Ontario. We have also invested an additional \$25 million to enhance our youth employment service, which helps more than 70,000 young people each year.

Our government will continue to invest in innovative programs to help to connect our young people to the job opportunities they need to succeed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1808.

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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

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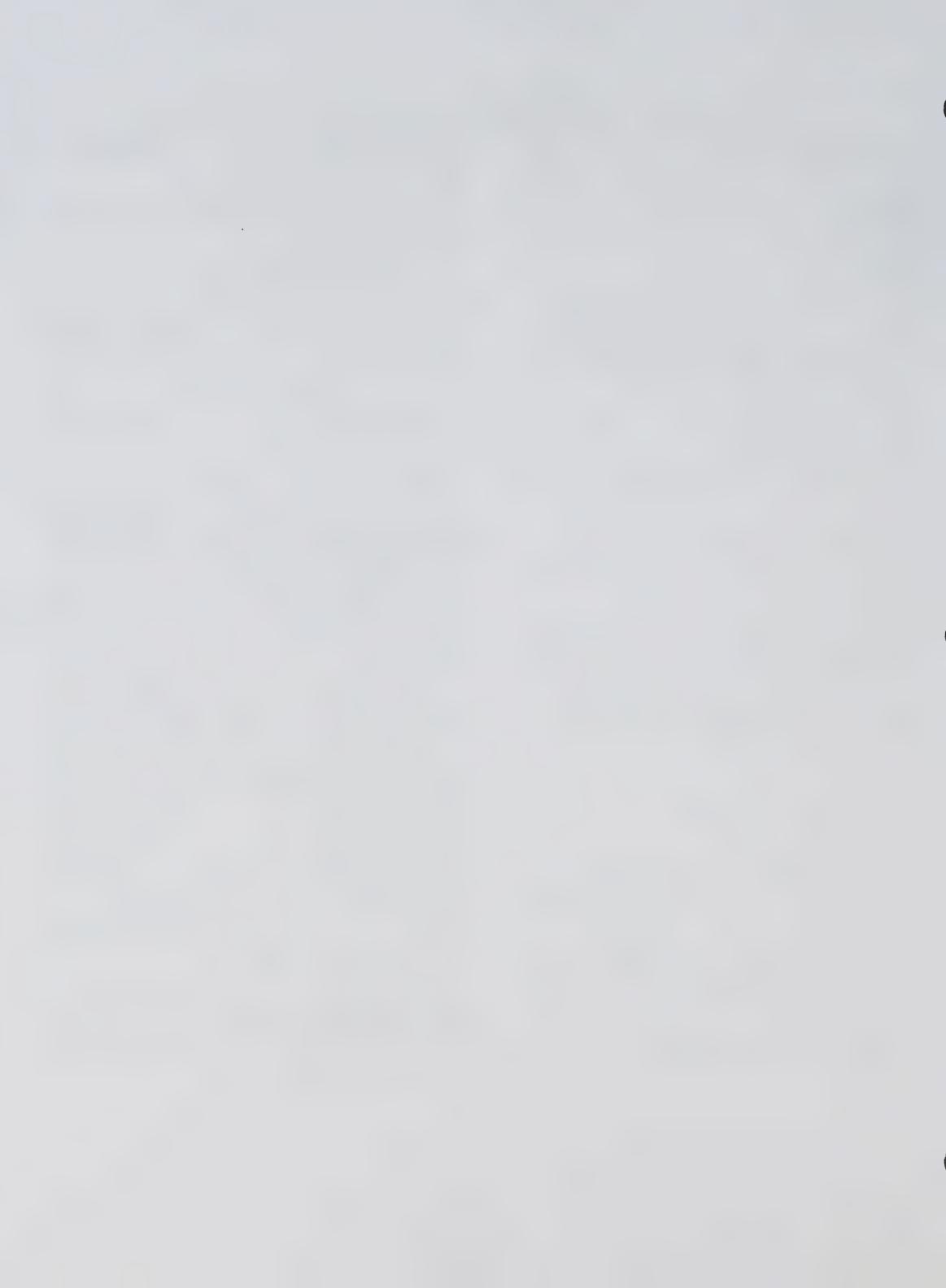
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Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
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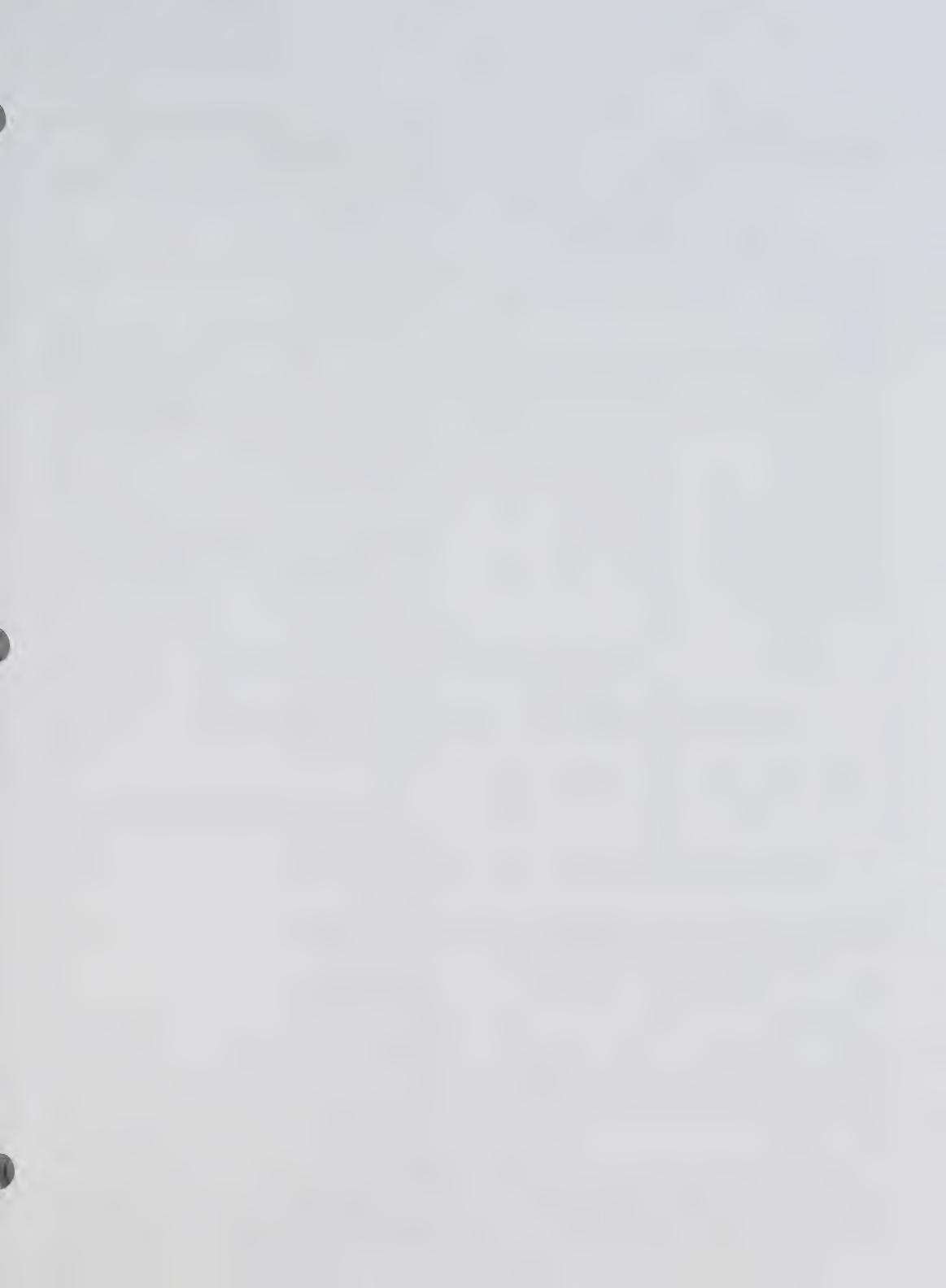
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Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch





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Wednesday 28 October 2015

Mercredi 28 octobre 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorables Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.

Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise this morning and add to the ongoing debate of Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015. Bill 85 is a bill that impacts a tremendous amount of legislation. In total, Mr. Speaker, this bill affects 15 pieces of legislation involving eight different ministries.

Interjection: Wow.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: How do you spell "wow"? That's incredible. It's one of these big, huge omnibus bills. This is certainly one of those infamous omnibus bills that people often worry about, a bill so wide in scope that unwelcome changes can be snuck through with less scrutiny. But in the case of Bill 85, I just don't think there is anything malicious or troublesome to be found. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, it's more of a housekeeping bill than anything else.

This bill was previously introduced in the last Parliament as Bill 151, and was known at that time as the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2013. Of course, that bill died on the order paper when my colleagues to my left decided they weren't able to support the government's budget motion, which prompted the Premier to ask the Lieutenant Governor to dissolve the House, triggering the 2014 provincial election.

The third party was very upset with the government at that time, and that was before they ever mentioned their plans to sell off Hydro One. The Liberals waited for a few more months to go on record with that one, as it was

never specifically mentioned once during the campaign. Given the outrage that that proposed fire sale has sparked province-wide, they feel that their decision not to mention the plan at all during the election was perhaps the right one. The government has their version of events and Ontarians have another. Time will tell who was right.

But back to the bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Absolutely.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You had that look that I should get back on track. We read each other very well.

The bill certainly has a grand title: the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. It sounds very impressive, but it is unfortunately rather modest in scope. Does the act improve government by getting rid of a disastrous two-tier bargaining system that has created chaos for children and parents as teacher negotiations drag on? No, it doesn't. That's a real shame, as this two-tier disaster has been so ineffective that it has had a direct impact on children's experience in the classroom and has resulted in Premier Wynne's Liberals using taxpayer dollars to pay for bargaining costs.

Now, if we believe the government, the Liberals' brand new bargaining system was such a failure that they had to spend millions compensating unions for extra costs. That's the best-case scenario: gross incompetence from the government. I need to go back and just ensure that, you know, the bill is called the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. Hmm. At worst, it's a callous and unforgivable misappropriation of government funds to funnel money to protect their own political interests.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The day is early, and we've already hit some nerves, it would appear; it would appear. I'm just saying.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My nerves aren't hit.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: No, not yours, Mr. Speaker. Of course, never yours. I speak to you, Mr. Speaker, but others listen when I'm speaking to you, and I think it's that nerve that gets hit.

At worst, it's a callous and unforgivable misappropriation of government funds to funnel money to protect their own political interests. Hmm. Given that the government has yet to provide, or even ask for, a single receipt for millions of dollars in expenses, Ontarians are left with questions—more questions than answers.

Taxpayers deserve to know what education programs this government had to divert money from in order to

make those payments. They need to know why this government feels that vulnerable students no longer need help to graduate. They want to know how the Minister of Education could possibly suggest that the programs did their job and are no longer necessary. Does the Minister of Education expect Ontarians to believe that no student will ever struggle to graduate again? Why are they not deserving of help?

The people of Ontario deserve transparency and honesty from their government. They don't deserve a government that must be caught red-handed before it acknowledges what it has done.

Schedule 3 of this bill refers to a very timely group, the Ontario Medical Association. Schedule 3 of Bill 85 provides for a liability exemption for the Ontario Medical Association, the OMA. The Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act would be amended to align with the 2012 physician services agreement between the province and the OMA. It would provide immunity for representatives of the OMA, including directors and staff, but not the association itself. In English, like most schedules found in this bill, this is simply a housekeeping measure. It seeks to protect the Ontario Medical Association in its capacity as the bargaining unit for Ontario's physicians and adviser to the government on health matters.

Unfortunately, it doesn't mean that the government will actually listen to the Ontario Medical Association. Just last week, Mr. Speaker, we had a number of doctors right here in the Ontario Legislature who took the time out of their incredibly busy schedules to come down to Queen's Park so that they could participate in our democracy. They wanted to have their voices heard because they say—and this is in their opinion, not mine—that the government is not giving them the respect they deserve and, more importantly, that this government's cuts are harming patient care.

They feel betrayed by a government that is hacking away at health care after promising it wouldn't. They are outraged that the government is suggesting that doctors and nurses are simply imagining health care cuts; that they don't know what they're talking about. For not knowing what they're talking about, they were pretty upset when the Minister of Health didn't bother to participate in the debate on the future of health care funding in Ontario. He went down the road to catch the Blue Jays game—the only time when Toronto is really blue. That's where he was. In the minister's defence, he met with the OMA president, Michael Toth, the previous week. But that was little comfort to the hundreds of doctors in attendance that day.

As I finish my remarks, I just want to reiterate my support for Bill 85. This is mostly a bit of tidying legislation meant to clean up messes caused by flawed past legislation, updating older legislation and bringing Ontario's laws in line with federal changes. The bill can also serve as an important lesson for the future for all of us here in the Legislature: If a government can take the helpful advice of opposition parties to strengthen bills before they become law, there will be less need to strengthen

and improve government after the fact. Over time, our respective parties will trade places in this Legislature. It is in our collective best interests, Mr. Speaker, to do the job right the first time, no matter who happens to be the government of the day.

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I'm very thankful to be able to contribute to the Legislature as a Deputy Speaker. It has shown me that despite our partisan differences, and there are a few on occasion—just saying—we're here for the right reasons: We all want to strengthen our home communities and this province. We all have valid insights to provide and unique perspectives to add to issues. Listening to everyone can sometimes be a difficult task when things get heated. Mr. Speaker, sitting in that chair—and I and others have sat in that chair—we know how heated this Legislature can get on occasion. This Legislature is at its best when members are able to bring their concerns to the table and have them heard.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you're aware of this bit of trivia, but people watching at home, and even some members here in the Legislature, may not know this, so I think it's worth mentioning: The motto "Audi alteram partem"—I took Latin back in school, by the way.

Mr. Jim McDonell: That was a long time ago.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It was a long time ago, and my Latin teacher, God bless her, would probably criticize me for my pronunciation of Latin. But that particular motto is one of a series of Latin phrases carved in the chamber of this legislative building. It challenges the members of the provincial Parliament to "Hear the other side."

Mr. Speaker, when the government spends as much time hearing opposing viewpoints as it does criticizing and dismissing them, then will we truly strengthen the government of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity, my pleasure.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's good to hear the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex debating this bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. Speaker, we have been talking about this bill, and the theme is kind of a consensus in the House, and he alluded to it as well. The title of the bill is a great title, but there's not much meat to the title; there is no real content to back that title up.

We also talk about the fact that this really is a housekeeping bill. In one of the areas in the schedule, number 1, they're talking about allowing a broader expansion of e-documents in the Provincial Offences Act to be submitted. So, really, this is housekeeping and can be done, perhaps, through regulation. But it's always good to make sure that we do have bills come to this House so we can have our input as the opposition.

We're saying that we are supporting Bill 85. It's a good thing that we have consensus in the House. Talking about the bill, as far as how much content there is in here, there's not a lot to get into as far as opposing. One of the

areas this bill expands is in schedule 7, the stretcher transportation services; there are some regulations there that are going to be very helpful. When you have people who have private vehicles and are transporting patients from hospital to home, you want to make sure there is a safe mode of transportation between point A and point B. So there is something there with respect to something that's going to help this Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

I look forward to it going to committee and hearing what comes back to the House and what has actually been presented at committee and strengthened this bill that we have today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully, you take the opportunity to see that Junior A hockey team now in your riding, the Hamilton Bulldogs, who were formerly located in another community in Ontario.

I want to comment on the remarks this morning from my good friend the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex. It's interesting: One of these days we'll get that riding renamed Chatham–Kent–Leamington, which actually really depicts the geographic boundaries of that riding. I know that the former member, a great colleague and friend, Pat Hoy, wanted to make that change when he was here.

One of the most important aspects of this bill is the change to the Highway Traffic Act dealing with these transfer vehicles that are now used throughout the province of Ontario. I remember one time that I was with my good friend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and we christened a brand new ambulance in the wonderful community of Renfrew, when they took over that vehicle.

What happens is that these vehicles get to the end of their lifetime. The EMS services across the province of Ontario strip all the good equipment out of those vehicles, and then they're sent to auction houses right across the province of Ontario. These vehicles are then picked up through the auction process and used for the process of transporting patients from hospitals home or to other areas. If you've ever seen some of these vehicles on the road, they look pretty rickety. I think this aspect of this bill is really important, in terms of people in Ontario. Finally we'll put standards in place for these vehicles that are frequently used in terms of non-emergency transportation services across the province of Ontario.

We all know that we stand on the shoulders of others, and previous governments in Ontario brought in high standards in terms of commercial vehicle operator's registration, CVOR, and this will be applied to vehicles that are doing this service.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to respond to the speech this morning by my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I really appreciate the fact that not only did he speak about what is in the bill, but he rightfully, as is

our privilege in this Legislature, spoke to some of the things that the bill did not cover. That's very, very important if we're really, truly committed to bringing forth the best possible legislation here as a group, as a collective body.

It is important that we highlight the fact that there are issues that, if the government is sincere—I suspect there is a certain amount of sincerity in everything they do. If they're sincere about good governance, they would have sat down with the opposition, the members on the other side of the House whom they are, by convention, compelled to listen to. As my colleague said, listen to the other side. We could have helped them. We could have helped them in drafting a bill that covered off some of the things that they have neglected in this bill.

I know that I don't have a lot of time, so I can't be overly specific. But he did talk about things, for example, like the issue with regard to paying the other side; not listening to the other side, in reference to the opposition, but paying the other side, in the context of the negotiation of a collective agreement. Most people out there find the concept revolting that you would pay the other side you are negotiating with, because it certainly skews the result in the end. Are you, in fact, trying to influence decisions with regard to those negotiations? I think that's something we all need to look at.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: As always, it's a privilege to be able to stand at my seat here and speak to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex and the story he told during his speaking time on An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various acts.

It's a great title, and we've heard this from this side of the House quite often. I've already had my time to speak on this bill, and a theme of that day also was that there are a lot of housekeeping measures in this bill that could have been taken care of through regulation instead of us being here spending time in the Legislature speaking about housekeeping measures.

0920

We could be talking about oversight measures that are so greatly needed here in this province, Speaker. Currently we don't even have an Ombudsman in the position to look over our province and ensure that we're keeping the government's feet to the fire. The great work that the Ombudsman did during his time here in the province—now, quite frankly, we don't have one. I hope that we are working our way towards the process of hiring an Ombudsman and making sure that it's a good deal here for the people of Ontario, and keeping this government's feet to the fire. Because bills like this, quite frankly, are really not going to do anything to improve the lives of Ontarians; other than section 7, because it's about time that we have some oversight for the patient transfer system. That's an important piece in this bill, but other than that, it's a lot of housekeeping.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the member from London—Fanshawe; our Minister of Agriculture, the man from Peterborough; the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke; as well as the member from Hamilton Mountain, for their comments this morning.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture talked about how my riding will probably change its name to Chatham-Kent—Leamington from Chatham-Kent—Essex. I'd like to go one step further. Perhaps, in that bill, we need to add some something further. Because I love alliteration, perhaps it should be called Chatham-Kent—Leamington—Lakeshore, because I have, in fact, taken over a chunk of Lakeshore as well. Then it would be called CKLL, just for what it's worth.

Mr. Todd Smith: So 104.5 CKLL.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Yes, 104.5.

Hon. Jeff Leal: You've got a good sportscaster beside you.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Absolutely.

My colleague had mentioned—and we had talked about this particular bill—that there's an old, old commercial you may remember—I won't tell you which one, but you probably can figure it out—where the little lady says, "Where's the beef?" This is actually what I would call a "vegetarian bill." I loved it when she said it. As a result of that, there is a lot of stuff in this particular bill that could have been cleaned up.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a good idea shouldn't care who owns it. I want to just read again the motto of this Legislature: "Audi alteram partem." It means, "Hear the other side." I believe that the government needs to take a little more time to hear the other side, because you know what? Contrary to, perhaps, their beliefs, we do come up with some good ideas as well, and we listen to them as well. We would encourage them to hear the other side and put a little more beef into this particular bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure. While you're chatting, I will continue along unless my time is up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Algoma—Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you. Bonjour.

Ce matin, on va avoir une petite discussion sur le projet de loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois. Eh! C'en est une bouchée, ça. C'en est une bouchée, mais si tu regardes à toutes les cédules qui sont proposées, de la cédule 1 jusqu'à 7, essentiellement, c'est beaucoup de nettoyage qu'on est en train de faire. Mais ce sont des petits pas par en avant.

Ce matin, je veux porter attention particulièrement sur deux cédules : ce sont les cédules 4 et 7 dont je veux parler dans mon discours.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma—Manitoulin. I want to say good morning to Mrs. Trepanier, who is probably watching this morning. Good morning to you and to Rose. You are always some great

inspiration to me because when I do go out and visit you, at the long-term-care facilities, you always fill my ear with my oratorical skills, which I always try to improve on a regular basis. Sometimes I still make errors and you are always eager to help me and correct me, so good morning to you.

Mr. Speaker, the bill addresses some matters that are important and need to be addressed, but mostly, as my colleagues have pointed out throughout the House, this is a thin omnibus bill, consisting of seven schedules on completely unrelated housekeeping issues. It looks to amend issues with the Ministry of the Attorney General, specifically the Courts of Justice Act; there are issues around the Ministry of Labour and allowing for and improving the ability to collect monies owed to employees; and there are also components that address the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. So there are a few different ministries that are covered throughout this schedule.

The one thing I do want to point out and raise with the government is, in particular to schedule 1—I won't spend much time on it; I hope they do. Schedule 1, the amendment to the Courts of Justice Act: to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act (Canada) to the list of proceedings that are within the jurisdiction of Family Court. The schedule is also amended to permit additional family law proceedings to be added to the Family Court's jurisdiction by regulation and would create a senior advisory family judge. This position will instruct the Chief Justice on matters pertinent to family law.

Other changes—this is what I want to raise attention to and hopefully raise a few eyebrows with the government—in schedule 1 bring the province in line with federal law around the Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act (Canada). That was a law that was imposed by the then Harper government on to First Nations communities and which raised a lot of controversy within those communities. I would hope that this government has learned from those errors and has reached out to First Nations communities and taken the opportunity to consult with them on how this affects them, and also consult with them respecting the matrimonial interest acts that they have developed in their own communities. I raise this with the government in an attempt to have them reach out to First Nations as well.

I want to go back to, particularly, schedule 7. With respect to the Ministry of Transportation, again, there are minor changes, but important, in terms of allowing or improving the regulations and safety around ambulances, prescribing the inspection and maintenance standards and ensuring that the prescribed equipment is on board. That is going to be very key, because essentially, right now, there are no regulations. There is, particularly in my riding, a pilot project that is in place. I would like to see it continue; however, we need greater transparency and regulation.

While we are talking about the Ministry of Transportation and safety, it is important to remember how much outsourcing and privatization have put the lives of

individual Ontarians at risk. I want to remind everybody of the risk that has been put on Ontarians, particularly with the Auditor General's report that came out about the snow removal process. The Auditor General released a very scathing report that went into details that looked at the snow removal process and how it affected Ontarians by its outsourcing. She compared it to when it was not outsourced and also to when it was outsourced. What is very troubling is that the Auditor General came out with a report that conclusively stated that lives were lost—yes, Mr. Speaker, lives were lost because of this outsourcing. The Ministry of Transportation is essentially responsible for the roads that were not cleared properly because of this outsourcing—roads where snow removal was not conducted in a proper manner or in an efficient manner. It left people driving on roads that were in terrible condition, resulting in accidents, and those accidents resulted in fatalities. These fatalities were avoidable.

It's very troubling that the government decided to go down this route. The evidence all points to the fact that this route is not the right way to go, and we're still going down that route now. I'm hoping the government listened to that report and plans to, for the upcoming winter, change the process, come up with an alternative, and perhaps go back to public snow removal, because the system is broken and is clearly not working.

In particular, in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin and across many northern and rural ridings, we have seen the shortcomings—actually, rather, the complete failure of snow removal throughout northern Ontario.

0930

I spend many of my days travelling to and from Queen's Park, particularly to my riding and within my riding. My riding is very big, as you know, Mr. Speaker. I have seen many individuals have close calls. I've seen others in ditches. I've seen people injured. I've pulled individuals out of those ditches.

There's something that we need to learn through this bill. It's got a very nice title: Strengthening and Improving Government Act. Well, let's do that. Let's have the discussion. Let's challenge ourselves in order to make things that much better.

I want to touch a bit as well on schedule 4, for the Ministry of Labour. The amendment that the government is suggesting does achieve an incremental improvement, but does it truly actually improve the government? I don't think it does. This is what we see in the Ministry of Labour: If you don't have compliance, if you don't have enforcement and if you don't have the resources to put into it—let me rephrase: no compliance, no enforcement, then there is really no point for this legislation. No enforcement, no resources: Why are you putting this piece of legislation forward? Because there's really going to be no substance in order to bring the changes that the Ministry of Labour needs to provide or needs to act upon, in order to bring enforcement. Again, if there are no resources, there's no enforcement.

I want to go back to the services that are going to be affected across my riding through this, and the com-

plaints that I've received from many individuals. Not only in Algoma-Manitoulin but across northern Ontario, we're seeing an attack on ServiceOntario kiosks that are throughout northern Ontario. These kiosks are having their hours reduced. The services that are normally provided at these kiosks are no longer going to be provided.

I have seniors who are going to have to drive longer distances, particularly on Manitoulin Island and Gore Bay, as a matter of fact—which is a lovely community, as you know, Mr. Speaker—who are going to be challenged. Now they're going to have to take their driver's test at a distance farther away from their home. People across the North Shore in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin are suffering because the hours are being reduced. Certain kiosks are being shut down.

These are things that are not acceptable. When we're talking about a bill which is entitled the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, I'm sorry to say, but I don't see it in Algoma-Manitoulin; and that's just not acceptable. People in my riding deserve to have a lot better, and our government needs to provide them with a lot better service as well.

There are many good things—some that are incremental, some that will make a change—in this bill, but some could be done a lot better. As a representative from northern Ontario, and particularly my great riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, driving safety is paramount in my riding. I want people to take their time. Winter months are coming up. We need to change our driving habits, not just those who are coming from northern Ontario to southern Ontario, but particularly those who are coming from southern Ontario to northern Ontario.

I took the time to try and highlight some issues that I hope the government will heed. I wanted to highlight those issues from a northern perspective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: A bill of this kind allows, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin has suggested, an opportunity to take specific instances that affect a particular constituency and deal with those.

I'm particularly interested in the non-ambulance transportation of patients. More and more, we see on our highways, although sometimes within a community, these vehicles that are going from place to place, transporting individuals who require medical transportation, but not necessarily in a place where you require paramedics, who do an excellent job.

It's important, as this bill does, that it prohibits STS providers from providing services if they don't have a valid CVOR certificate. It prescribes requirements and specifications for the identification of STS vehicles, to distinguish them from ambulances. That's very important for people to know. For ambulances, as we know, we have to get out of the way immediately and allow them to go through. These vehicles are non-emergency, but they are important.

I think what this bill does, among many other things—you might say they're minor amendments, but they are

significant nevertheless. What it does is make it a safer trip for people. It sets out rules so that people know what they're getting into when they get into one of these vehicles. In the past, there was a bit of vagueness there that many people said required some action on the part of government. This is just one of those pieces of action. I commend the member for suggesting some of the other improvements he thinks are necessary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Pembroke-Nipissing-Renfrew.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Close enough; we've got the geographical area right.

Again, it's a pleasure to comment on the speech this morning by the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. And again, he spoke to some things that the bill doesn't address. That's been our concern from the start. You know, the government should have expected this response.

I did have a chance to speak to this bill a little while back. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to complete my speech because the objections raised by the government were so strong that, at the end of the day, the Speaker shut my debate off. I was shocked, and I hope that it never happens again. I was hurt, because I had a lot of things that I wanted to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Since the member felt that the Speaker shut his debate off, the member had had many warnings—I happened to be the Speaker that day. He had numerous warnings about getting off track, and that's why he was shut down, as he put it. I just want to put that in the record so we don't have a misunderstanding. Thank you. Continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. I wasn't referring to who was in the chair that day, because I try to forget those things. It's not personal for me. But I wanted to point out that when that happens, the member loses the ability to speak to the things they wanted to speak about that are missing from this bill.

When the government entitles a bill "good governance"—the audacity to actually bring a bill under that name to the House—they should expect that the opposition is going to see that as an opportunity to speak about all of the things that could be done to make government better in the province of Ontario. Maybe they could have addressed the issue of time allocation motions and how they're used in this House to shut down debate. I know I got shut down personally, but the government shuts down debate period.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I just want to command our member from Algoma-Manitoulin for, again, talking about the items that were in the schedule. This bill is very much procedural. He pointed out a couple of those items, one of them being Family Court law. Again, when he described that, as I was listening to him and as I had read before, it's just making things updated; right? There is really no legislation that's going to be affecting someone adversely in there. In that respect, the bill is important to

make sure that things are done that are going to help people and not be opposing someone's rights or access to courts and claims that they have. That was great, as far as that goes with the schedule that's in this bill.

The member also talked at length about snow removal, which is an extremely important northern issue. After the Auditor General's report, there were many glaring recommendations that could have happened in order to prevent accidents, fatal accidents in some cases, when you're talking about road safety.

He talked about ServiceOntario and how the reduction of the service hours of the kiosks are affecting people accessing ServiceOntario. That's extremely important, and we know there is a lot of outsourcing of ServiceOntario services. When you're calling that 1-800 number, you don't even know if the person is in Ontario.

When it comes to good governance and strengthening government, there are certainly things this government is lax in doing, and one of them is paying attention to the accountability and transparency piece. I'm looking forward to the Financial Accountability Officer's report. Today the officer is going to report about Hydro One. That will give us some interesting suggestions about good governance, Speaker.

0940

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to rise and to speak to this bill. I believe that all sides of the House have acknowledged that there is some really good work done on this bill and there are many important items that we need to be addressing as government.

One of the items that I note is that this is also about how we work intergovernmentally, and in particular with municipal governments. I would note in this bill that there is an improvement to the City of Toronto Act, making it possible for the work that is currently underway with the city of Toronto's Toronto Transit Commission and the regional municipality of York to reach an agreement about how they will work seamlessly across jurisdictions for the new Toronto-York Spadina subway.

This particular extension of the subway is the first time that a subway will cross municipal boundaries. It's very important that this relationship is a strong relationship, that it's done well, and that this is a successful extension to the subway line.

We know that these investments that we are making in infrastructure across the greater Toronto and Hamilton region—the intent of this is to make sure that we have a seamless regional transportation system. This bill is addressing how these two municipalities will work together, making sure that it's seamless, that it's efficient, that it's effective, and that we provide improvements to our rapid transit system.

Speaker, we have to work together. I know that businesses have talked about the need to get their workers to places, and this will improve the efficiency and the productivity of our region.

I agree with the comments that have been made, that this is a needed improvement, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but chuckle. It just goes to reconfirm why people in northern Ontario are so frustrated.

I am sorry. I highly respect the Associate Minister of Finance, but to talk about subways in response to my comments that I made this morning, and housekeeping—you're right. In Brantford, Hamilton, Toronto, Waterloo—it just goes to prove the point why so many northern Ontarians are so frustrated that their comments and their views are not being heard here at Queen's Park.

I invite you. Come and join me in Algoma-Manitoulin, and we'll take the subway from Gore Bay into Blind River, and then we can take the train from Blind River into Wawa. I'm sorry. That's how disconnected the issues are. I can't help but chuckle, Mr. Speaker.

To the Minister without Portfolio: Thank you for your comments, and for actually listening to the comments I made this morning.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke brought up some of the issues that I had touched on which aren't in this bill. My mother had this expression: S'il faudrait, tout bien, puis en tout cas. What that means is, "What could have, what should have and what wasn't to be." There are a lot of those things that could have been included in this bill. I want to thank him, because he triggered that thought about my mom, and I always like thinking about my mom. She's a fantastic woman. If she would be here today, she'd be sitting—thank you, my friend, for triggering that memory.

The member from London-Fanshawe was exactly right and bang on. I did talk about family law, and I did raise a flag that this government should be reaching out and actually sitting down with First Nations communities in regard to how this particular act is going to be affecting their community.

I just want to finish off by saying that northern Ontario just wants to be heard. When we are not, this is what happens. It begs me to chuckle this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's nice to be standing, as my shoes are now dried out, after the walk in to Queen's Park this morning. That was quite a rain out there this morning. I guess that would be the remnants of Patricia that we're experiencing here in the GTA. But we're dry now, and we're ready to move on to what has been dubbed as a rather provocative bill—at least the title of the bill has been a bit provocative, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act—because what it does is, it elicits a response from the opposition parties that you would expect.

It's time to start strengthening and especially improving the government that we've had here in Ontario for the last 12 years, a government that doesn't understand rural

Ontario. And, as the member from Algoma-Manitoulin just illustrated, it is very frustrating and it's almost laughable, what we've been experiencing here. I'm sure there is a subway in Wawa, but they serve sandwiches at that Subway. It's a different kind of subway in Wawa.

This bill, as I believe the way the member from Algoma-Manitoulin described it, is a thin omnibus bill. It affects 15 different acts, eight ministries, and it's thin on detail. There's not a lot of meat on the bone here, is the way that it's been described this morning, and I would have to agree.

I am very fortunate to have an OLIP intern in my office. Her name is Justyna Zegarmistrz—and I apologize to the folks at Hansard for that, I will give you the spelling in a moment. Justyna has gone through the bill, and we'd like to talk about some of the issues that we have with the bill because there are so many areas within each of these ministries where problems that we're seeing in Ontario today aren't being addressed by this particular bill, and they really could have. All you have to do is look at the front page of the papers—all of the papers—in the last week and you will clearly see that we need to improve government in Ontario.

Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, attempts to bring forward updates to amend Ontario legislation so that it remains current and relevant for Ontarians. Despite affecting over 15 pieces of legislation and involving over eight ministries, Bill 85 remains limited in its scope and is a piece of legislative housekeeping, rather than a bill that introduces real, substantive change in Ontario. Considering the eight different ministries affected by the bill, the government missed an opportunity to address the numerous deep-rooted problems present in each ministry.

Considering first the Ministry of the Attorney General, Bill 85 is largely amended only to include new federal legislation. With some additional clarifications on the duties of the senior advisory family justice and the streamlining of internal procedures and financial procedures, the bill could have been more comprehensive in its reach and scope to strengthen and improve government, as is the title of the bill.

There have been issues that have been addressed in the House recently by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington in question period with the Attorney General, and by the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock in relation to the shootings that occurred earlier this fall in Wilno and some of the issues that we're facing with repeat offenders who are let back into the community without signing the proper documentation: These are some of the items that could have been addressed in this piece of legislation.

The amendments affecting the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services are a further example of the surface-level reach of this bill. In this amendment, the bill aims to introduce some minimal cost savings, allowing all out-of-date certificate stock to be used before reprinting new stock. Surely more costs savings could be found than just the recycling of stock in a ministry as

large as this, but that's as deep as the government went in this bill.

Moving on to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care: Bill 85 aims to protect the Ontario Medical Association as a representative body for Ontario's physicians and as its adviser to the government on health matters. Providing immunity to the representatives of the Ontario Medical Association and restricting individuals from pursuing civil action against agreements between the OMA and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care does very little to affect real change for the thousands of Ontarians who are depending on our health care system. Understandably, this amendment may be necessary to protect representatives from legal action, from negotiations done in good faith, but Ontarians need a stronger and improved health care system, not just amendments that are housekeeping in nature.

Rooting out waste and building a patient-centric model of health care delivery is what Ontarians really need, and I know that's what all of us as MPPs continue to hear about at our constituency offices and through the correspondence from our residents. A bill that's supposed to strengthen and improve government should be more ambitious and farther-reaching than the one that's presented by the government in Bill 85.

0950

Continuing down the list, the Ministry of Labour seeks to modernize outdated regulation by bringing Ontario's legislation in line with federal legislation. Updating the classification and labelling of hazardous workplace materials by introducing the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals is important to keep Ontario workers safe, but, again, this government needs to move beyond just scratching the surface. I'm sure more can be done to keep Ontario's workers safe. In my office, we hear all the time from people who have WSIB issues. There are so many workplace issues that could have been dealt with in this bill that aren't addressed at all.

In regard to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, further minor housekeeping changes are being introduced. Amending the City of Toronto Act and the Municipal Act to send receipt notices of bylaws to the Minister of Finance rather than to the Minister of Education does not enact real change for our citizens.

Allowing the city of Toronto to expand cross-border transit to pick up and collect fares in neighbouring jurisdictions is a small step forward, but the root of transit issues in Toronto and across the province remains a serious one, especially for those folks who are requiring medical treatment. It's impossible for some of the residents in my rural riding to get to Kingston to receive the treatment that they need, which is a two-hour drive or a two-and-a-half or three-hour drive, in some cases, depending on where you are in the North Hastings part of my riding.

Repealing obsolete subsections of the Municipal Act and adding minor amendments may be necessary, but this government can and should do better. They can do more

in a bill they entitled the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

For the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Bill 85 follows a similar path as with the previous ministries examined. Clarifying the continuity of the ownership of college assets from the board of directors to the college and allowing the college registrar to appoint investigators to investigate the conduct of a member is, once again, a surface-level change that fails to consider the other issues facing this ministry. Our community colleges are facing cutbacks on a regular basis. Loyalist College in my riding, in the Belleville area, had to remove \$4 million from its budget recently. That's a serious cut to the services that are provided at Loyalist College.

In respect to the Ministry of Transportation, Bill 85 makes important first steps towards ensuring the regulation of drug-impaired driving. By following suspensions for drug-impaired driving similar to those for drinking and driving, law enforcement officers will be able to do more to make sure roads are kept safe for Ontarians. Nevertheless, the bill does little to detail how drivers will be tested for drug impairment. Ensuring that drug-impaired drivers are apprehended off the roads is critical, but so is ensuring that testing procedures respect the rights of an individual and are conducted in a manner that can be upheld in the courts.

Furthermore, this bill also makes vague and unclear amendments to regulate medical transportation services. The safety of medical transportation services is undeniably important, but the Liberal government also has an obligation to the citizens of Ontario to outline how they intend to regulate these services. Ontarians certainly haven't forgotten the government's track record and lack of oversight in other scandalous affairs such as Ornge services.

While Bill 85 brings in some necessary updates to Ontario's legislation, this government needs to do more to make real change to each of these ministries so that they always serve and act in the best interests of all Ontarians. As such, we'll be supporting this bill while imploring the government to instigate deep-rooted change, especially in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Transportation.

In my riding, in the Quinte region, Quinte Health Care is facing major, major cutbacks: \$12 million had to be cut from the budget. They're currently going through the process of removing services from four hospitals in our region: Belleville General, Trenton Memorial, North Hastings and Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital. Nurses are going to be laid off again. We saw 58 of them laid off earlier this year. More are going to be laid off next year. These cutbacks are serious, and they're tied to a funding formula that the government has brought in that relates health care funding to growth in a community. But this government, at the same time, is bringing in legislation in the Legislature prohibiting growth in rural areas because they believe what's right for Toronto, or right for larger urban centres, works in rural Ontario. It clearly doesn't. The people in Prince Edward-Hastings

need their health care services just as much as those here in the GTA.

This bill could have been a whole lot better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's a pleasure to rise on the behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. I want to commend the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. He's absolutely correct. Let me be clear: There are no subways in Algoma-Manitoulin. However, there is a Subway sandwich shop which you can normally take, not with a token, but maybe with double cheese and double meat, which can get me from Manitoulin Island to Blind River and on to Wawa. I just want to make that clear, my friend.

His comments were very much in line with what I have to say. When you look at these schedules, schedules 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are basically in line in regard to doing some housekeeping. This is exactly what this bill is: It's housekeeping. With the title of the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, if we're going to do something, let's do something real. Like you get the double meat over at Subway, let's put some meat into this sandwich so that we can actually accomplish something.

He did talk about the MTO issues that would come in regard to enforcement and the resources. Actually, there are some issues in regard to individuals getting proper notification when it comes to having suspensions or enforcement done. There have always been some individuals that have had issues with receiving mail service and proper notification. Where is the accountability going to be when an individual presents himself at a licensing bureau to make sure that that notification was provided to him so that there is no disruption? In northern Ontario, there is no transit system, so transportation is a big issue.

We are looking at schedule 7 to create a structured transportation services section under the highway act by doing that and by setting those standards. We need to make sure those standards are there, because if there's something that we've learned through privatization—and we don't have to look too far. We just have to look at Ornge and the problems that happened there, and the problems that are potentially going to be happening with the privatization of Hydro One. Learn from the mistakes, and make sure we don't repeat them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I enjoyed the comments of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. One of the great advantages that we have in this Legislature is the opportunity, as individual members, to access the Ontario legislative intern program students who come and provide us with the kinds of services that are very helpful in carrying out our responsibilities as members. So I thank the member for sharing with the people who are watching today the advantage of having a legislative intern, many of whom go on to be very successful in life. Some stay in government; some go into the private sector. It's a very, very good program, and we'll be celebrating it soon.

There's a bit of a dilemma that we encounter with bills of this kind. Having sat in opposition probably longer than I've sat in government, I know the arguments the opposition is going to make. Here's the dilemma: What happens is that the opposition hates omnibus bills. Yet today, the members are telling us that there should have been more things in this particular bill. I understand that. This is a so-called housekeeping bill, which is not designed to have huge changes that are going to have major effects on the province. You don't want to see those in an omnibus bill. I understand that. But a bill of this kind looks at various housekeeping items or technical items that have to be corrected, and does so.

The member mentioned a number of areas that are significant. His observation that all of us are looking forward to a more patient-centric health care system—he mentions that—I think all of us are looking forward to that.

But I do come back to that dilemma of shall there be more in the bill or less in the bill? I'm sure if we'd put more in the bill, there would have been complaints justified by the opposition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The good government act is not just a housekeeping act. I think if it was a housekeeping act, it would be better described as sweeping things under the carpet. That would be the Liberal way of doing housekeeping. I think it does demonstrate just how lazy this government is, and how cavalier they are when it comes to taking their responsibilities to the people of Ontario.

I just want to draw people's attention to schedule 3 of this good government act. Schedule 3 limits any civil proceedings against any person or any agent or any part of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care as a result of—I'll read them:

"any recommendation made to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care" for,

"(i) insured services under the plan;

"(ii) the amounts payable under the plan in respect of the rendering of insured services ...

"(iii) other amounts payable to physicians by the minister or the crown."

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It just so happens that there is a dispute under way with the physicians in Ontario and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. There is much discussion going on about the need for the physicians to sue this government in civil court for the handling of the fee service clawbacks and rate reductions.

Is this really a housekeeping bill or is this what we have seen in the past from this government: changing the law to prevent somebody from taking an action against this government for unlawful or inappropriate actions earlier? We saw it with the Beer Store and the LCBO, where they changed the law to prevent a civil suit from coming forward. I'd like to have the senior member from

the Liberal Party maybe address that in his next comments instead of the OLIP intern program.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member from Prince Edward—Hastings for his comments on this bill and the things that he talked about that weren't in the bill but are, quite frankly, very important.

One of the things that he mentioned was the WSIB. I picked up on that one because I found it very interesting that he talked about how his office is inundated with WSIB and issues within that, but it's not addressed in this bill.

If my memory serves me, it was the Conservatives who actually gutted the WSIB and created—I know, Yak, it's hard to swallow—the problems that are going on within the WSIB. The Liberals have continued to push those matters even worse with the hiring of a former Conservative to be the chair. Elizabeth Witmer is now the chair—for several years—and since that time the WSIB cases have tripled and quadrupled in my office with people being denied and services being taken away from them after several years of needing WSIB through no fault of their own; being injured on the job and being told that they don't qualify for WSIB funds.

One case in particular is a man who worked in a steel company and was hit with 6,000 pounds—or tonnes, whatever it would be—of steel. Whichever it is, that hurts a body. Yet the man is told that he can work in a theatre accepting tickets from patrons who are coming to the theatre. Those are the kinds of things that I know both of these parties have created in our WSIB system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thanks to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, the Minister without Portfolio—the minister of Blue Jays games, as I like to call him, and I congratulate him on a good season for his favourite baseball team—the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who brought up some good points as well, and also the member for Hamilton Mountain in regard to WSIB, which is an ongoing issue that all of us are dealing with in our constituency offices and are trying to solve some of the problems that exist.

Specifically to Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act—as I mentioned off the top of my remarks, this is a government bill that elicits a reaction from the official opposition members and the members of the third party because we're in agreement over here that this government hasn't been very well run over the last 12 years in a lot of different areas and there is a lot of improvement that is necessary.

You don't have to look any further than the newspapers across the country and across the province this past week. We have situations where unions are being paid with blank cheques, basically, and there are no receipts involved. I think this is part of what the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington was

talking about, where things are just being swept under the carpet.

An auditor would never go for what has occurred when we're talking about the negotiations in the teachers' unions and the millions of dollars that have been spent by the government to pay the union members for the costs of negotiations, which have never been put in black and white in a receipt anywhere. There are no receipts. That's why our party has called in the Auditor General to look into those transactions, to find out why those occurred and whether that money was indeed necessary to be spent. These are the types of things that we need to hold the government to account on. These are the kinds of things that should be addressed in government bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure, as always, to rise in this House and to represent my riding and speak on behalf of the good people of Essex county. It's an honour each and every day, and today it is particularly interesting.

I'm compiling a little bit of information here, Speaker. What I'd like to highlight to viewers who are tuning in this morning, mainly my mom and my dad, who always watch—hi, Mom and Dad. There are two for sure that we know. For everyone else that's tuning in who is interested in the proceedings of this place, as everyone should be, I would like to inform them of something that's interesting about this particular bill, Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. It sounds quite compelling and quite grandiose in that it should—

Miss Monique Taylor: Gripping.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's gripping. Everything should get better from here on in because we are strengthening and improving government. Who wouldn't want to do that? Who wouldn't endeavour to do that, Speaker?

However, this bill, I believe, is at eight and a half hours of debate on the clock, as it were, today—which is good. That's good, wholesome debate. We are discussing the issues that are relevant to the piece of legislation. I would like to inform viewers who are tuning in that of the 36 bills that the government has introduced or tabled in this House since the beginning of this session, 14 of them they have time-allocated, so they have cut debate on 14 of them. I'd like to thank my colleague the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who gave me the list of the bills there: Bill 6, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act; Bill 7, Better Business Climate Act; Bill 8, Public Sector and MPP Accountability—they go on. There are 14 in total that they've cut debate on, things that are important, that have real significance to the prosperity of the province and real effect in the lives of the people of the province. They deal with health care. They deal with jobs. They deal with climate change. They deal with MPPs' accountability. They deal with child care.

They chopped off debate, really stymied the process in this place and limited the democratic right of all elected members to discuss and bring forward the concerns of

their communities. However, when it comes to a bill that is, by and large—and it seems to be agreed upon by all members of the House—a housekeeping bill that has minimal impact on the lives of folks, they're ready to drag the puck on this thing.

I'm dumbfounded at the priorities of this government and their ability to actually take into consideration the voices of people from Algoma-Manitoulin, the voices of people from Essex, from Hamilton Mountain on other substantive bills. They don't want to hear about it. They want to jam through and ram through their agenda. However, when it comes to something that's innocuous, like Bill 85—and I urge again viewers who are tuning in to look it up, take a look and see how this bill will affect your lives; it really will not. They have a majority government. You would expect that they would put a lot of thought into the construct of the bills to ensure that there is full consideration given to the needs of the province. This is not one of those bills.

As my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo stated, when she spoke to the bill, the Clerks at the table must be shaking their heads in reference to who writes these types of bills on behalf of the government, because they are not substantive bills.

Again, being housekeeping, it affects seven schedules, in very minimal ways that are not contentious. As opposition, we don't see any nefarious actions on behalf of the government built into the language of the bill. One of the aspects, however, does have some impact on the transportation services which were referenced as "stretcher transportation services" in Ontario. They are currently unregulated. These are private operators that operate ambulance services and medical transportation services.

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What this is essentially, as I see it, is the Uber of ambulatory services. This is what they're doing. They are regulating an unregulated aspect of emergent transportation services, and they absolutely should.

It's interesting to note that they first indicated they needed regulation on this service in 2011. So they needed four years in total to realize that they should bring forward legislation—again, an astounding indication of, frankly, laziness, ineptitude, inability to actually prioritize the needs—real, substantial needs. It's incredible.

Interjection: It could be done by regulation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It could be done by regulation. They've wrapped it into this bill. It is the most substantial part, and I'll focus on that because it really has a little bit of meat to the bone here.

New Democrats believe that stretcher transportation must be regulated. There's no question about it. Up to 500,000 people in the province are transferred in this mode. We think they deserve to know that it is a mode of transportation that's regulated, that has oversight, that is safe, that is affordable, that is effective, and that the people who operate it are qualified and in it for the right reasons.

We've seen another mode of private transportation that supports patients and those in medical emergency situations, under the vision of this government and under the watch of the government: Ornge air ambulance. We saw that absolutely fail, again with the guidance of the Liberal government. They took their eye off the ball. They allowed a private operator to bilk the system—milk the system, rather—and it failed.

Thankfully, we had an effective opposition to raise those questions, to hold the government accountable and to make the necessary changes. I want to thank our colleague from Nickel Belt, who really fought a great and valiant fight on that and brought some necessary changes.

The patient stretcher transfer service indicates that they will require that these operators receive a CVOR. Stretcher transportation providers would be regulated now as commercial vehicles. It's interesting that they didn't, prior to that. They would have been just private vehicles, similar to the ones we drive each and every day. So now they will need to be registered as a CVOR and be inspected by Ministry of Transportation inspectors.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: That's a good thing.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a good thing. It's the mechanism in which we regulate and inspect commercial vehicles. Let's see if they're going to be given the resources to actually be able to inspect all of these vehicles. Typically, CVOR checks are done through the service centre or MTO checkpoints along major highways, or random stops by Ministry of Transportation officials.

I'd be interested to see how many of these vehicles they are going to be pulling over while they're in transit. You're going to be reluctant to pull over an ambulance, when you see them going from point A to point B, to do a CVOR check.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: They're not emergency vehicles. They're not.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, we're going to see. Even though you would assume that there's a patient in there who requires transportation, you're not—I'm not quite certain how that's going to work, if you think about it, in a real, functional way. You may have to look at delivering some more resources to ensure that those checks are actually happening.

There are glaring omissions in the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex. There's an ongoing conversation between the minister and the member from Essex while he's speaking. We talk through the Chair.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's mostly been me.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mostly to you. Thank you.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I apologize, Speaker. I should go through you, and I will.

Ontarians deserve clear and transparent regulations to protect vulnerable patients who need non-urgent transportation to get to hospital, to get to medical appointments. That's what they expect. That's what they want to see. However, schedule 7 in this bill does not offer that

level of accountability and oversight still, even though acknowledging that they require regulations, it doesn't.

There are no details in the bill about regulations being imposed on stretcher transportation through the providers, the LHINs, in our province. There are no complaint mechanisms for patients or families. There's no mention of accountability mechanisms on how the ministry would deal with contraventions to the stretcher transportation service providers' provisions. And there is no assurance that contracts between hospitals and stretcher transportation services would be made public. We won't know how much this service is costing us as opposed to how we are certainly able to do that when it comes to managing our ambulance services.

Speaker, it's always a pleasure, and I appreciate the indulgence through the Chair.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is my pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today my friend from Amherstburg Suzanne McMurphy, and the grandparents of page Marco Di Laudo, Ron and Marlene Regher, who are here from Leamington. I'd like to welcome them to the House today.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to welcome a group of students all the way from Ukraine studying parliamentary procedure. We have here today Valentyna Sakhno, Kateryna Zhupanova, Ivanna Antonova, Artur Nadiiev and Marian Taranovskyi. They are all here to witness question period.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to welcome two businesswomen visiting from Beja, Portugal, on the occasion of the 32nd cultural week of Casa do Alentejo in my riding of Davenport, Florbela Nunes and Delfina Marques of Capote's Emotion. Bem-vindos.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It is with great honour this morning that I introduce Chef Michael Smith in the east members' gallery today—he is the host of Chef Michael's Kitchen and Chopped Canada—and Ron Lemaire, President of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association.

The chef is a brand ambassador for the Canadian Produce Marketing Association Half Your Plate initiative. They invite all MPPs to a reception this evening in rooms 228 and 230 to discuss the need to encourage the consumption of additional servings of healthy fruits and vegetables.

The CPMA Half Your Plate initiative is a simple and understandable way to promote healthier eating and will be the focus of Chef Smith's cooking demonstration this evening.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It is with great pleasure that I introduce a guest, Debbie Wilson, who is in the gallery. She is from our constituency office in Kanata and she is

here to help us with her Magna Carta evening at Fort York tonight.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I apologize. I failed to introduce these two wonderful guests earlier, Andrea Micieli and David Valentin, also in the members' gallery, as well as Celso Pereira from my constituency office. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. The Minister of Education has said she was unconcerned about a potential investigation of the Auditor General into the \$3.74 million given to teachers' unions. Does the Premier share similar feelings?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier instruct her members of the public accounts committee to support an Auditor General investigation into the unprecedented windfall given to teachers' unions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is, the Auditor General has the authority to look at what she chooses to look at. Of course, we always will work with her and cooperate with her.

As I know has been said a number of times in this House, we are talking about a process that has been successful. Students have remained in the classroom. The agreements were in line with our net-zero bargaining framework. That successful process required extra resources. I know that the members opposite know that there has been a change, that there has been a transitional process, and it was very important that the resources be in place to make that successful.

Mr. Speaker, the other reality is that this money has not flowed. So, again, I say to the members opposite, I'm not sure how familiar they are with the negotiating process and the collective bargaining process, but the agreements are in place. The money has not flowed yet, and I'll have more to say about that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: It's not just the PCs that are calling for this investigation. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has said, "The Premier appears to be funnelling public money into these unions, who then turn around and spend money campaigning for her government." They added, "This is not the kind of conduct we should expect from a transparent and democratic government, and we think the Auditor General should investigate."

Will the Premier show some integrity, pre-empt our motion and open the books to the Auditor General?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I said in the first answer that of course we'll work with the Auditor General. We will absolutely work with the Auditor General, as we always do. She has the opportunity to look at what she chooses to look at.

The cost of the successful process that has been undergone with the unions was offset by savings that were found through the collective agreements. The funds did not come out of the classroom.

But I said in the first answer that this money has not flowed, and that is the reality. It's part of the agreement, but it hasn't flowed, and teachers' unions will provide an accounting of their costs. Before that money flows, there will be an accounting of how that money was used—or what that money is for and what the costs were. That is, I think, Mr. Speaker, consistent with what we have been saying about the cost of getting these agreements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: I still didn't hear an unequivocal "yes" to pre-empting our motion at public accounts. Even the Toronto Star has called the cheques to the unions "disturbing."

If the government has nothing to hide, if everything is by the book, then why not let the Auditor General review these expenses? Why won't the Premier let the Auditor General review the \$3.74 million handed out to the unions?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the Auditor General wants to look at this process, she is welcome to do that. We will work with her, we will co-operate with her, as we always do. But, remember, this is a successful process. It's the first time that this particular process has been used. There were resources required to get these successful agreements, and that has happened.

This money has not flowed. The teachers' unions will be required to provide an accounting before the money flows so that it will be clear exactly how the costs were incurred. But the fact is, it's been a successful process. It was a transitional process because it was new, and the money has not flowed. There will be an accounting from the unions about how the costs were incurred.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Premier. After almost a week of questions, it's clear the Premier doesn't want to tell us where the \$2.5-million payout came from. The Premier uses buzzwords like "overall compensation package" and the "cost associated with negotiations." Nobody in Ontario buys those answers.

If the Premier won't tell us where the money came from, can you at least tell us what it bought you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about where the money came from. In fact, when we said that the funds, these resources to complete the successful bargaining process, where that money came from—it came from things like early, discounted payout of retirement gratuities; lowering the cost of sick leave; making the delivery of professional development more efficient. So when I said that that money came out of the overall compen-

sation package, those are the kinds of examples, because sick leave, retirement gratuities—that's all part of the compensation package of teachers. That's where the money came from. It didn't come from the classroom; it didn't come from programs for students. We have been clear about that. Those of the kinds of examples of where the money came from to make sure the resources were in place to get—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't point the finger over here. You're in charge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I am, and I'm standing.

Supplementary?

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Ms. Sylvia Jones: Every day that we ask these questions, there are new talking points, new spin, new answers. It's not acceptable. The Premier's unwillingness to tell us where the \$2.5-million payout came from leads me to talk about where it could have come from.

What does \$2.5 million from the classroom look like? It looks like 75 fewer educational assistants. It looks like a week of healthy breakfasts for 10,000 classrooms. It looks like over 33,000 grade 9 math textbooks. It looks like almost 115 students on a field trip to the Ontario Science Centre. Was it worth it, Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When you're dealing with a group of people who do not believe in the collective bargaining process and therefore have little experience of how it actually works, and don't understand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When a group of teachers who are organized into a federation make a decision that they choose to offset one expense by reducing the payout of retirement gratuities or they take a change in sick leave—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. The member from Leeds—Grenville.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —then that allows that money to be used for something else. This is not money that was coming from classroom programs. It's not money that was coming from student programs. I'm sorry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just to make sure you heard: The member from Leeds—Grenville, second time. The member from Renfrew, second time. I'm not going to accept shouting people down.

Finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm sorry that the member opposite doesn't understand the process. I'm sorry that they have no interest in actually understanding how collective bargaining—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: What I understand is, \$2.5 million isn't available to students in Ontario.

While this government is giving away much-needed money in our system for pizzas and hotels, the Liberals are turning their backs on students and parents. Assumption Catholic School parents in Ottawa had to raise \$50,000 for a new playground. Parkview Public School parents in Unionville aimed to raise \$25,000 for musical instruments, smart boards, novel sets, and numeracy and literacy centres. Rosebank Road Public School in Pickering purchased 11 fans for classrooms.

Those students and parents shouldn't be fundraising for fans while the Premier shrugs off \$2.5 million and calls it business as usual. Again I ask: What did the \$2.5 million buy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's what I understand: When we came into office, 68% of students in this province were graduating from high school. Mr. Speaker, 84% of students in this province are graduating from high school. That's because we have invested in more teachers. It's because we've put in place student success teachers, who work with kids who were falling through the cracks under the previous government, who didn't have the supports in the school to help them to navigate their way through high school. It's because we created literacy and numeracy specialists. It's because we have put in place the supports that students need. That's what I understand about why our education system in this province is one of the best in the world. Over the last decade, people have come from all over the world to see how we have transformed our education system. We're going to continue to do that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier met with the Prime Minister designate. The Premier's statement indicates that she talked about infrastructure. This was an opportunity for the Premier to ask the incoming federal government to follow through on their promises for new infrastructure money so that the Premier doesn't have to sell off Hydro One. This is what Ontario families, municipalities and business have been asking the Premier to do. Did the Premier stand up for Ontarians and ask the Prime Minister designate to provide the money promised so that she—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It goes both ways.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not helpful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, come to order.

Finish, please.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Did the Premier stand up for the people of Ontario and ask the Prime Minister designate for the money promised, so that we can build the infrastructure we need and not sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Did I stand up for the people of Ontario, and do we have a Prime Minister now who is going to work with people across the province and is going to work with Ontario to make the investments we need? Absolutely.

I'm very proud of the work that I have done. I'm very proud of the fact that we now have in Ottawa a government that understands that working with Ontario, working with Premiers across the provinces and having an infrastructure plan across the country is in the best interests of this country. I am so proud of that fact.

But does it mean that as provinces we abdicate our responsibility? No. We have to continue to do the work we know is necessary for our province to be able to work now with the country, so that we can build up the whole country.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier used to say that the sell-off of Hydro One was a difficult decision. But we've clearly seen that there are other ways to get the money we need for infrastructure. After all, the sell-off has never represented more than 3% of the Premier's infrastructure promises. Yesterday, when she met with the Prime Minister designate, she had a chance to get herself off the hook of this difficult decision and, at the same time, stand up for the 80% of Ontarians who do not want to see our Hydro One asset sold off.

Did the Premier make a case to the Prime Minister designate for the sufficient infrastructure funding that we need so we can build the infrastructure we need and so that she does not sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think this is a very revealing question, because what it says about that party is that, given half a chance, they would abdicate the responsibility to make difficult choices. They would not set priorities. They would not take the tough decisions that are actually what leadership means.

You have to take tough decisions. You have to look at the whole scenario and you have to say, "Okay. What is in the best interests of the people of this province?" Every municipality across this province has a need for infrastructure investment. If, as a province, we don't take that seriously and we don't follow through with our plan to invest \$130 billion over the next 10 years, then we have no right to ask the federal government to step in and take us off the hook. We have to step up, we have to take responsibility and work with our partners at the federal level.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just because the Premier has made a bad decision doesn't mean that the Premier is stuck with that decision. As the facts and circumstances change, so can her decision. What the Premier is clearly saying is that she was presented with the nearly unprecedented opportunity to stand up for the people of Ontario, and she refused to do so. The Premier has stubbornly dug in her heels and refused to listen to Ontario families, municipalities and businesses that have all made it clear they do not want to see our Hydro One sold off.

She never needed to sell off Hydro One in the first place. But now, with the billions of dollars in federal money promised for infrastructure and transit, the sale is even less necessary. Why did the Premier refuse to stand up for Ontarians, to insist that we have sufficient infrastructure funding to build the infrastructure we so dearly need and not sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think we just see this differently. I think that it is the responsibility of the government in Ontario to take the initiatives that are necessary for the people of Ontario, to make the investments in roads and bridges and transit, in hospitals, in schools and in water systems that we know are so desperately needed across the province.

At the same time, it is critical that we have that federal partner; no matter who the federal government is, we need that participation of the federal government. Thankfully, now we actually have a federal government coming into office that understands that, that is going to work with the provinces and territories across the country to support and to make those investments that are necessary. But they expect, as they have a right to, that provinces will take their responsibilities seriously. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

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PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question again is to the Premier. Here's another track: Tomorrow, the Financial Accountability Officer will release his report on the impact of the sell-off of Hydro One. This is despite the fact that the Premier has failed to follow through on her promise of openness and transparency, by refusing to provide all the necessary documents requested by his office. However, after months of hiding this wrong-headed sell-off from the public, the people of Ontario will finally get a glimpse into the impacts of this sell-off.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier: Will the Premier commit today, in this House, to follow through on the advice and the recommendations of the FAO and his report?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have been part of the appointment of the FAO, Mr. Speaker. We appointed him. I have not seen the report. I look forward to seeing the report and seeing what his recommendations are.

But what I know, as the Premier of this province—what we know, as a government—is that we must make investments in infrastructure, and that people's quality of

life depends on our ability to make those investments that will allow them to move more freely, whether it's in the GTHA or whether it's in smaller and more rural communities, so that in northwestern Ontario, bridges won't have to be closed because they're in disrepair. We need to make those investments so that we have infrastructure that can be relied on by individuals and by businesses. That infrastructure investment is critical, and we will move forward with it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The sell-off of Hydro One represents the biggest privatization of a public asset in the history of this province. We know that every time this Liberal government has tried to sell off or privatize an asset, the result has cost Ontarians dearly. Just look at the gas plants and the ONTC.

The Premier has avoided all public and independent scrutiny of this deal and, instead, has listened solely to her embedded banker. Thanks to New Democrats, however, this time, we have a chance to see the impacts of this sell-off before taxpayers and ratepayers are on the hook.

If the FAO finds that this deal, this sell-off, will hurt families and businesses, will the Premier do the right thing and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite is accusing us of listening to people who have experience in the financial world, who are experts, who understand how these processes work, then we did that. We absolutely did. We did listen to advisers who have experience and who understand how to do this.

Are we going to continue to invest in infrastructure? Are we going to make sure that there are protections in place in terms of broadening the ownership of Hydro One? We are. We are retaining 40% ownership. The way that electricity rates are set now by the Ontario Energy Board is the way that they will continue to be set. Will there be the ability of the government to retain control over major decisions because of that 40% ownership? Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Those protections are in place. They are in place for good reason, in order to protect the interests of the people of Ontario. But we're going to invest in infrastructure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The NDP demanded the creation of a Financial Accountability Office so that we could catch spending scandals before they happened. Ontarians watched as the sell-off of ONTC went from a \$265-million savings to an \$820-million loss for the province. They watched as the cost of the gas plants soared from \$40 million to \$1 billion.

This time, we can stop a bad deal before it happens. If the FAO reports that selling off Hydro One is a bad deal for Ontario families and businesses, will the Premier do the right thing and back down from the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said to the member, I have not seen the report. I look forward to the Financial Accountability Officer's report.

Will we continue to invest in infrastructure? Absolutely, we will. Each one of those situations is different. It's interesting, coming from the third party, the discussion about the ONTC. It was a very important issue in the north, in North Bay particularly, that we look at the ONTC; in Sudbury, it was a real concern that we look at the ONTC and we make a decision that was in the best interests of transportation in the north. We did that, and we worked very hard with ONTC to come up with a solution that wasn't a complete divestiture of ONTC.

I would have thought that party that proclaims itself as supportive of the north would have understood that that was in the interests of the people in the north.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Jack MacLaren: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you gifted money without purpose or records to teachers' unions. It was \$1 million. It was \$2.5 million. Now it is up to \$4 million, and who knows where it will end?

Your government's track record is that you cannot be faulted for thinking big. Billion-dollar scandals are your specialty; you are good at it. But it was never right, and it isn't right today. In fact, this time, it might not even be legal. Section 70 of the Labour Relations Act states that an employer cannot make a financial contribution to a trade union.

Minister, did you consider the legality of your million-dollar gifts before you gave the money away?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually are in the process of implementing a new labour relations process. We're going through a huge transformation in our system.

We're very pleased that after a year of hard work, we have reached agreements with three of our labour unions, three of our teacher unions: the Ontario English Catholic teachers; the OSSTF, the secondary teachers in the English public system; and the AEFO, which represents all the francophone teachers in the province. With each of those agreements, we were successful in achieving net-zero agreements. Any arrangements with the unions to offset the costs of that transformation are part—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: To the Minister of Education: Minister, section 70 of the Labour Relations Act is very clear. Employers cannot give millions of dollars to unions. It is against the law. It is wrong.

Union members may wonder if the money given to union management was meant to influence the union's recommendations to its membership. Parents may wonder why the money was diverted from classrooms to the union. Taxpayers may wonder if their money was wasted yet again. The members on this side of the House wonder not only about the legality of your gifts, but, more importantly, the accountability, integrity and morality of your actions.

Minister, what you did was wrong. Why did you break the law?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

It would also be helpful if members on the side where the question is coming from were not engaging in conversations with either side while the question is being put. I ask the same when the answer is being put.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act is actually very—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Immediately after I ask for it not to happen, the member for Renfrew decided to do it, so he is warned.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act is actually very clear that I am not the employer of teachers in the province of Ontario, in school boards.

In fact, the reason that we implemented the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act is precisely because the school boards are the employer; the ministry is the funder. There is this dichotomy of the role, that funding and employing are actually two different roles. That's exactly why we have the act. But what I do want to comment on is that there have been no cuts to the classroom.

1100

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today is yet another Wynne Wednesday in our public elementary schools. Congratulations for having a day named after you, Premier. It's also the day ETFO is ramping up their work-to-rule action by pulling out of voluntary extracurriculars.

Education workers want to support students in the classroom as well as volunteer for extracurricular activities outside of their work duties. Ontario families want quality education and extracurricular activities, but this government continues to cause chaos in our schools and is forcing students and families to pay the price for a minister who can't get the job done.

The Minister of Education has lost all credibility and needs to go. Will the Premier admit that the Minister of Education is failing our kids and causing chaos in our schools?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would remind the member that there are three agreements in place with most of the teachers in the province. I'd just remind the member of that.

I said earlier that the party opposite, the Conservatives, don't understand the collective bargaining process. I understand that. I understand they don't believe in it, so they don't understand it. But I would have thought that the NDP actually would have gotten it, that they actually would understand the collective bargaining process, and, given that there are three agreements in place, they would understand that we have been able to come to agreements.

This Minister of Education is actually very, very skilled at her job. The fact is, this is a difficult process. The only way we're going to get an agreement is at the table. We're at the table. I hope that very soon we will have those agreements.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Just a note to the Premier: To bargain, you actually have to stay at the table. So there's a lesson for you.

Back to the Premier: Contrary to the minister's claims, which change daily, there have been many cuts to the classroom. This government brags about its plan to cut \$500 million—wait for it—from the classroom. The Premier should be ashamed of her government's record of taking away special education resources from kids that need it the most—\$22.5 million, Speaker.

Our kids are paying the price for this government's neglect of education and the failure of this minister to get the job done to avoid chaos in our schools. Our kids deserve better, and it's time for the minister to go.

Will the Premier immediately cease issuing pink slips to education workers and instead issue a pink slip to her Minister of Education?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I got involved in provincial politics because of education, because I believe so strongly that reinvesting in our education system after eight years—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We've watched in this province over the last 10 years as test scores have gone up, as kids have gotten more support, as more kids are graduating from high school. As I said, when we came into office, 68% of kids were graduating from high school; now 84% of kids are graduating from high school. That's a huge, huge improvement. That's at the core of this discussion.

We need to continue to improve our education system. That's why it's so important that we engage in a respectful collective bargaining process, that we have that relationship with our education workers and our teachers. We're going to retain that, because we have engaged in a respectful process. The only place to get the deal is at the table, and we're—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Earlier this week, the minister and the Premier were at the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers' 22nd annual national conference. In their remarks there, the Premier and the minister highlighted our government's commitment to

key aboriginal economic development initiatives announced within the past year, including the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund.

I'm very proud to be part of a government committed to working with our aboriginal partners to achieve real progress towards developing improved outcomes for First Nations people and creating prosperous, healthy and strong communities.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us about the initiatives the government is supporting to create new opportunities for aboriginal communities through the AEDF?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for that question. It was indeed a pleasure to join the Premier in delivering remarks to CANDO's 22nd annual national conference earlier this week.

Ontario has been working for many years to strengthen its relationship with aboriginal peoples and communities. Developing initiatives that improve the lives of people and create opportunities for aboriginal communities and businesses will go a long way towards improving our relationship and improving aboriginal outcomes.

The Aboriginal Economic Development Fund is a three-year, \$25-million initiative that is supporting business, employment and training opportunities for aboriginal communities because when aboriginal peoples prosper, all Ontarians prosper.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm sure all members of this House are pleased to hear what a wonderful job our government is doing to help create new economic opportunities for aboriginal partners to build a stronger, more prosperous Ontario.

Creating opportunities for aboriginal communities to see meaningful employment and business development across sectors, including natural resource sectors, is the right thing to do. By providing the necessary support, we can work with them to develop long-term strategies to diversify local economies and collaborate on region-wide projects. This will help create stronger and more economically prosperous aboriginal communities.

Could the minister please expand on some of the initiatives the Ontario government is supporting through the AEDF? All members of this House want to hear this.

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, since the fund was established, Ontario has invested over \$7.8 million in funding 43 separate projects. These include \$1.5 million over three years in grants for economic capacity-building projects, as well as business financing for promising community projects and aboriginal-owned businesses.

The Chapleau Cree First Nation is working with energy experts to develop a regional renewable energy plan. The Thessalon First Nation is receiving an Economic Diversification Grant for the expansion of its biocentre. A regional partnership was granted to Wahgoshig First Nation, who is working with Primero Mining Corp. and Northern College to develop a mining training program

for its members. And Whitefish River First Nation received funding under the fund to conduct the planning and preliminary work required to support a commercial-industrial park development in their First Nation.

This is progress, Speaker. This is good for aboriginal communities and this is good for all Ontarians.

ADDICTION SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, a clinic providing opioid support programs, with locations throughout Ontario, has closed an East York location, and it's closing the Lawrence Avenue location in North York at the end of this month.

Dr. Dale Wiebe, an associate program director at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, has said, "It is a sad time for addiction medicine in Ontario." He continued, "Closure of addiction medicine clinics will impact patients' ability to access quality medical care, and this loss of access will contribute to the risk of relapse to substance use."

Mr. Speaker, what does the minister say to those individuals fighting their addiction who are now at a higher risk of relapsing, and to the doctors who are forced to close the clinics that helped them?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. I think the member opposite agrees that, at the end of the day, this is about patient care and the quality of care and the services that are provided to them. We have invested, over many years now, in programs to support those who, unfortunately, have these addictions to make sure that services are in place right across the province in order to support them, including the methadone and other support clinics that the member opposite is referring to.

The change that we made recently was simply to bring the reimbursement for simple urine dipstick tests, a laboratory test that those same clinicians provide in those methadone clinics, in line with new technology and what the remuneration should be and, in fact, what we are currently paying in all of the community labs when that test is performed. Again, it's a urine test; it's actually very cost-effective. We brought the cost that we're reimbursing those physicians in line with what we pay laboratories.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: Addiction can have a devastating impact on individuals struggling with substance abuse, as well as their families. It also has severe ramifications on government budgets: The average health and social costs are about \$44,000 per addict per year. It does not make sense that this government has cut the availability of addition services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the minister himself is a doctor and has seen this first-hand. Why is the minister allowing the government to slash fees and funding for addiction services and for the individuals who are most in need of this government's help?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, that's just not an accurate portrayal of what this government is doing. We continue to invest. We increased the investments that we are putting towards mental health and addictions, and addictions particularly. Our expert group, our leadership council on mental health, has addictions as one of the areas that they're specifically looking at.

What we're talking about here is a simple test. The patient still gets that test. We brought the remuneration to what it should be based on technology advances and innovations. We're paying them, and in fact we're still paying them more than what we pay our community labs for this simple urine dipstick test. I think that's an appropriate thing to do; I think that's an efficient use of resources so we can stay focused on the patient and making sure those patients get better.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Premier. More than 185 municipalities have passed resolutions opposing the sale of Hydro One. In Durham, these municipalities include Whitby, Clarington, Pickering, Uxbridge and my community of Oshawa. These municipalities know that their rates will rise after Hydro One is sold. They know that manufacturing and auto sector jobs will disappear with the rising costs of electricity. Will the Premier listen to municipalities like Whitby and Oshawa and stop her short-sighted sell-off of Ontario's oldest and most important public asset?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm going to reinforce what I said earlier about the need for investment in infrastructure, because I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, that Durham region is very interested in increased investment in infrastructure. Our members from Durham are very clear that they would like to see enhanced investment in infrastructure. So I would say to the member opposite that as she talks about the importance of listening to municipal councils, she might want to take into account what those municipal councils say to us every time we meet about the need to invest in infrastructure, including transit, including expansion of roads and bridges. That is exactly why we have had to make decisions in order to find the resources to make those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Of course, I appreciate hearing that the Premier does acknowledge there is an area east of Toronto. That's great.

The Ontario Energy Board clearly cannot say no to Hydro One. This winter, peak-hour electricity rates will be 25% higher than they were last winter.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's enough.

Finish, please.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Just imagine the rate increases that Hydro One will demand when private profits drive all decisions.

The Minister of Energy says people should just stop using electricity during the day. I suppose he thinks

Whitby and Oshawa's factories should shut down during the day as well.

Will the Premier listen to municipalities like Whitby and Oshawa and stop her sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is really starting with a very, very false premise. Hydro One does not set its own rates now; it will not set its rates later, Mr. Speaker. She talks about private companies automatically being able to raise rates. Private companies like Enbridge and Union Gas are also regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, and their rates have been going down over the last five years. It is totally independent.

In addition, in terms of planning the system, it's still within the responsibility of the IESO; Hydro One will not plan the system. The Ontario Securities Commission will require them to disclose salaries and many other things, such as quarterly audited financial statements, to be made public. There is good governance.

The premise of the question, that rates will go up because its ownership is being broadened, is totally, absolutely incorrect.

WETLANDS CONSERVATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. Ontario's biodiversity and natural heritage contribute substantial ecological and economic benefits to our province. Part of that biodiversity is Ontario's wetlands. Wetlands provide essential benefits, including helping to protect our water supply from excess nutrients, like phosphorus, that can lead to algal blooms.

Ontario has approximately 24% of Canada's wetlands and 6% of the world's wetlands. Our wetlands are clearly an incredible and essential resource.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please explain to the House what our government is doing to protect Ontario's wetlands?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for the question.

Our government knows that wetlands provide many important economic, ecological and social benefits, including reduction of flood damage; improvements to water quality; habitat for plants and animals; and fishing and hunting opportunities.

Our ministry, under the leadership of my parliamentary assistant, the member from Burlington, is currently conducting a review of the province's wetland policy framework.

A wetlands discussion paper has been posted on the ER, and I encourage interested Ontarians to comment on the paper before October 30, 2015. The feedback we receive on this paper will help identify challenges and opportunities associated with wetland conservation in Ontario. This input will be used to inform development of a strategic plan for Ontario wetlands that will guide the government's actions over the next decade.

Speaker, we're committed to protecting and preserving the province's wetland resources and will continue to work closely with our partners on this file.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the minister for his answer and for his leadership on this important issue.

I'm pleased to hear that our government is taking a proactive role in protecting Ontario's wetlands, and I encourage all Ontarians to provide comments on the wetlands discussion paper.

By the 1980s, almost 70% of original wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield were converted for other uses—in some parts of southern Ontario, 90%. Many Ontarians are concerned that these losses may still be occurring.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could he please explain what our government is already doing to restore Ontario's wetlands?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I again want to thank the member from Ottawa South.

We support on-the-ground wetland conservation through strategic partnerships, agreements, competitive granting programs and tax incentive programs.

In fact, Speaker, the Ontario government is an active participant in the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture, a collaborative government–NGO partnership which seeks to implement wetland conservation activities.

Last year, we provided Ducks Unlimited, for example, with \$275,000 to support wetland conservation projects under the EHJV program. My ministry's Land Stewardship and Habitat Restoration Program provides up to \$20,000 in financial support to organizations for similar projects. The Conservation Land Tax Incentive Program provides for 100% property tax exemption on eligible conservation lands in return for landowner agreement not to undertake activities that will have a negative impact on the natural value of those lands.

We value wetlands in the province of Ontario and continue to work with our partners to ensure their sustainability in the longer term.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Shoddy conditions at the Liberals' new, gold-standard Toronto South Detention Centre are again putting the lives of corrections officers at risk. Three weeks ago, a female officer was trapped inside an elevator with multiple inmates for over an hour. Thankfully, the officer was not harmed, but you can only imagine the fear that she felt.

Shockingly, elevator issues were reported to your ministry months ago, Minister. Mr. Speaker, can the minister explain why he has allowed the prison's countless problems to go unaddressed, and why no action was taken on the known elevator issues?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for the question. I can assure the member opposite that the officials in my ministry work extremely hard to make sure that

conditions, as they relate to facilities in a detention centre, are always met.

Obviously, I can't speak to the specific circumstance he's raising in question period, but I'll be more than happy to get him a response to that.

I want to reassert very clearly that we take the health and safety of our correctional staff and of inmates very seriously. There is constant work that is ongoing in making sure that our detention centres are safe and secure and, of course, in ensuring that there are proper conditions in them.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, back to the minister: Two weeks ago, the Toronto South Detention Centre security monitor control system went down. This system controls the entire facility, from emergency alarms, cameras, doors, locks, to intercoms, and much, much more. This system is the heart of this facility and must be functional.

Facility security problems are a public safety threat. Officers are tired of reporting the same problems over and over again. They're scared to come to work in a deadly work environment. They have lost faith in the ministry and are worried that any negative reports or audits will be buried.

Will the minister take immediate action at Toronto South Detention Centre and conduct an in-depth safety review for public release?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As I mentioned earlier, our staff works extremely hard and very closely with our correctional officers and staff who are front-line in our detention system to ensure that they are operating in a proper function for the safety and security of our communities and that of our staff. This is paramount.

Speaker, as we transform our correctional system, Toronto South Detention Centre plays a very important role in that transformation. TSDC, as it is known, houses innovative programming and health care services and improves our ability to rehabilitate offenders. It has both a medical unit and a dedicated infirmary which has been open since June of this year. They currently have five mental health nurses and operate a forensic early intervention service which is the first of its kind in Canada, in partnership with CAMH.

These are the kind of transformation activities that we are working on to ensure that we provide effective rehabilitation and re-education for offenders.

RAIL SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. Premier, it has been eight very long months since the train derailment, the explosion, the huge fire and the oil spill into the Makami River just outside of Gogama in my riding. Most recently, the local person in charge of testing water quality has resigned his job. The people of Gogama and Mattagami have been deeply affected by the CN derailment. They're having a tough time, with very little help.

Premier, why is the provincial government missing in action? Why are the local people left to take on CN by themselves?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, they aren't left by themselves. We've had multiple ministries, including our staff, on site. Water quality testing has been occurring and reported through the Sudbury public health unit. There has been very, very careful supervision and testing, and I can go through that privately with the member in some detail.

We have a great concern in Gogama. There have been two rail derailments. Had they been further down the track in the city, we would have had something similar to a Lac-Mégantic. This government and my colleague the Minister of Transportation have been very assertive with the federal government. We are now looking, with the new federal government, to this issue being taken more seriously. We monitor it very carefully to see that CN fulfills its responsibilities. If they don't, there are stronger measures we can take.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: If this train had derailed, sending 10 flaming cars full of bitumen in the Humber River here in the GTA, there would be flocks of lawyers and of investigators to help locals fight CN tooth and nail, but, as dead fish and oil continue to appear on the water surface, this government has left the people of Gogama to fight on their own.

Premier, how come after eight months, no one is willing to say something as simple as, "It is safe to eat the fish"? What is the government doing to ensure that the health of the people, to ensure that the quality of the water—will the Premier's newfound relationship with Ottawa help to make sure that hazardous cargo doesn't go through our communities so that no one has to live through what the people of Gogama and Mattagami are living through right now?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for her question. As the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change said in the opening answer, and as I believe everyone in this chamber would know, that dealing with rail safety, while of paramount concern to the province of Ontario, is primarily actually exclusively a federal responsibility.

Over the last 16 months, I've had the occasion to raise the issue of rail safety directly with the now, soon-to-be former, Minister of Transport for the federal government. We have corresponded back and forth several times about this issue, as have other Ministers of Transportation across the country, because at the provincial level, we recognize the importance of making sure that the federal government takes their responsibility in this regard safely—that advocacy will not end on behalf of the people of Ontario. We'll continue to talk to the feds about making sure that we get this right.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues. The Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan was launched in March of this year. Since then, the permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women was established, along with the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment.

The government has launched a very successful media campaign, seen by millions of people around the world on TV and the Internet. Yesterday, the minister introduced the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act.

Speaker, could the minister please tell this House what Ontario has been doing since March to help stop sexual violence and harassment and to support survivors?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for this very important question. I want to thank her for her work as the Chair of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, and I want to thank all members of this Legislature who are on that committee doing excellent work.

The government knows that all Ontarians deserve to feel safe from sexual violence and harassment in their communities, in their workplaces and in their schools. That's why, since we launched the action plan in March, we have increased and stabilized funding to community-based sexual assault centres, to hospitals and to sexual assault and domestic violence treatment centres.

As the member mentioned, we have also been running a very successful province-wide public education campaign using the hashtag #WhoWillYouHelp, and over 83.5 million people have viewed this ad.

I was pleased to rise in the House yesterday to introduce the legislation. I'll talk more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I, too, would like to thank the minister for her answer and for her dedication and commitment to this very important file, so thank you to you.

This kind of continued investment across ministries to various supports for survivors is welcomed right across the province. In fact, yesterday at our announcement, we were joined by numerous stakeholders across Ontario, including Sara Casselman, who is with Sexual Assault Support Centre of Waterloo Region in my riding of Kitchener Centre. I know that she was very pleased to hear yesterday's announcement.

We look forward to hearing more details on the legislation tabled yesterday by the minister. Specifically, this bill will amend six government acts. Could the minister please describe the changes that this legislation is going to bring in, if passed?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: As the member mentioned, the legislation would amend a number of government acts, such as removing the limitation period for all civil sexual assault actions.

It will also eliminate the two-year limitation period for victims of sexual or domestic violence to apply for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

It will also require employers to investigate and address complaints of workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, and require employers to take all reasonable steps to protect workers from workplace harassment.

It will also require colleges, universities and private career colleges to have a stand-alone sexual violence policy that is developed with student input and reviewed every three years.

Additionally, the legislation will require the notice period to end tenancy for survivors of domestic and sexual violence—that notice period will be shortened.

All of the amendments are very important and I hope that I can count on the entire House to support this very important legislation.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Today in the media studio, two brave young women, Erika Crawford and Brooklyn Mills, who join us today, and their families shared heart-wrenching stories of living with the impacts of a rare disease, Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, with no support from their provincial government.

1130

EDS is a genetic defect in the connective tissue, causing severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors and symptoms that add up to a very poor quality of life.

When families like the Crawfords seek treatment for this life-debilitating disease, they are turned away time and again by this government.

Will the Premier commit today to providing the support and treatment for those suffering from EDS?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First, on behalf of the entire Legislature, certainly our hearts go out to the family and the individuals that are suffering from this rare and debilitating disease, EDS.

I also want to commend and acknowledge the individuals and the families that are here today for taking the time to come here to Queen's Park, but most of all to show the courage that they have in expressing their concerns about the treatment that they require, as well as the advocacy that they're providing.

My ministry has assured me that there are a number of Ontario specialists who can help patients who do suffer with EDS. We have highly qualified neurosurgeons with the necessary expertise, but we've heard, and I've heard, from these families that they've had difficulty in accessing those specialists and those services. We rely on the expertise of our clinicians and our experts, but we also want to make sure that the process is as simple as

possible for families and for individuals, and that we're making the situation easier, not more difficult.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: Speaker, this afternoon I will be reading in petitions that the Crawfords have initiated, with over 8,000 signatures, calling for the minister's action. To this day, the story has been the same: Your ministry refuses to pay for out-of-country treatments that they say could be performed here in the province; and Ontario lacks the specialists required to perform necessary surgery in our province. Families are forced to remortgage, to max out credit cards and lines of credit just to receive the out-of-country treatment that allows sufferers to stay alive. The pain of living with EDS is enough without having to face the uncaring government that has all but abandoned them.

Will the minister respond to the pleas of the over 8,000 who have signed the petition and either provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who have experience with EDS patients to perform the necessary surgeries or provide the funding for out-of-country treatment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the work that you've done as MPP for Brant, as well, in supporting these families and advocating with my ministry on this important issue.

Largely inspired by the advocacy and the stories that I've heard from these individuals and their families, I brought together a working group on how best to move forward, specifically on EDS, in this province and to ensure that families do receive the support they need. The group first met in late September and will be providing us with their recommendations in a short while. The panel includes Critical Care Services Ontario, representatives from SickKids and other leading institutions to look at ways to improve services for individuals suffering from EDS. My ministry is also creating a special committee, in addition to the current process, to review applications for all out-of-country funding for pediatric surgery.

I hope the families can stay after question period. I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with them.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Premier. On March 24, shortly after the sexual violence action plan was tabled, your government received a letter signed by 21 experts and organizations from Building a Bigger Wave, a provincial network of hundreds of agencies working to end men's violence against women. The letter urged a halt to the changes to the Partner Assault Response Program, because they are putting women and children at risk. Seven months later, the Attorney General continues to completely dismiss the concerns raised.

What will it take for the Premier to listen to PAR providers and violence against women agencies about the crisis her government has created in the PAR Program?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The Partner Assault Response Program is a component of the province's coordinated response to domestic violence. This program is very important.

I'll answer the question right away. There was no cut to the Partner Assault Response Program. After numerous consultations, working with the partners, working with those who work in the sector, we have reviewed the number of weeks that people would be engaged in the program. We were informed that there was a long waiting list. The advice was to reduce the number of weeks that an individual will be in the program. That's what we have done, and we have eliminated the waiting list altogether.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon, on a point of order.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: In my question to the Premier earlier today, I mentioned 115 students on a field trip; I should have said 115,000 students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have the right to correct their record, and that was a point of order.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: On behalf of my colleague from Perth–Wellington, I would like to welcome the family of today's page captain Faith Knechtel: her mother, JoAnne Knechtel; and her father, Clare Knechtel. They were in the public gallery this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Agricourt, on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: This week is reading week across the province of Ontario. I have a great visitor from my riding of Scarborough–Agricourt: a student from Seneca College. D'Juan Callaghan is a first-year business administration and management student visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Welland, on a point of order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: In the gallery earlier was Clarke Eaton, the new legislative liaison from OPSEU. I just wanted to welcome him here today.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list draw of October 5, 2015, for private members' public business such that Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 7 and Mr. Miller, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, assumes ballot item number 30.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would like to make a footnote and thank the members; we are getting there when it comes to third-person discussion and questions to the Chair and answers to the Chair. I reinforce with all of you that it is the best way to do it. It's tested through time and it works quite well. I appreciate all the members for making that effort.

DEFERRED VOTES

POLICE RECORD CHECKS
REFORM ACT, 2015LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME
DES VÉRIFICATIONS

DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks / Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de dossiers de police.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1142.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On September 29, 2015, Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks.

All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 94; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 27, 2015, the bill is ordered referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2015LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION
AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes	Ayes
Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie
Anderson, Granville	Harris, Michael
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hatfield, Percy
Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy
Baker, Yvan	Hoggart, Ann
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric
Ballard, Chris	Hunter, Mitzie
Barrett, Toby	Jaczek, Helena
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jones, Sylvia
Bisson, Gilles	Kiwala, Sophie
Bradley, James J.	Kwinter, Monte
Campbell, Sarah	Lalonde, Marie-France
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff
Chiarelli, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack
Colle, Mike	MacLeod, Lisa
Coteau, Michael	Malhi, Harinder
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael
Del Duca, Steven	Martins, Cristina
Dhillon, Vic	Martow, Gila
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill
Dong, Han	McDonell, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McGarry, Kathryn
Forster, Cindy	McMahon, Eleanor
Fraser, John	McMeekin, Ted
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte
Gates, Wayne	Meilleur, Madeleine
Gélinas, France	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Norm
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul
	Moridi, Reza
	Munro, Julia
	Murray, Glen R.
	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
	Naqvi, Yasir
	Natyshak, Taras
	Nicholls, Rick
	Oraziotti, David
	Potts, Arthur
	Rinaldi, Lou
	Sandals, Liz
	Sattler, Peggy
	Scott, Laurie
	Sergio, Mario
	Singh, Jagmeet
	Smith, Todd
	Sousa, Charles
	Tahkar, Harinder S.
	Taylor, Monique
	Thibeault, Glenn
	Thompson, Lisa M.
	Vanhof, John
	Vernile, Daiene
	Walker, Bill
	Wilson, Jim
	Wong, Soo
	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Yakabuski, John
	Yurek, Jeff
	Zimmer, David
	Gélinas, France
	Gravelle, Michael
	Gretzky, Lisa
	Milczyn, Peter Z.
	Miller, Paul
	Murphy, Glen R.
	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
	Naqvi, Yasir
	Natyshak, Taras
	Nicholls, Rick
	Oraziotti, David
	Potts, Arthur
	Rinaldi, Lou
	Sandals, Liz
	Sattler, Peggy
	Sergio, Mario
	Singh, Jagmeet
	Sousa, Charles
	Tahkar, Harinder S.
	Taylor, Monique
	Thibeault, Glenn
	Thompson, Lisa M.
	Vanhof, John
	Vernile, Daiene
	Walker, Bill
	Wilson, Jim
	Wong, Soo
	Wynne, Kathleen O.
	Yurek, Jeff
	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays
Barrett, Toby Harris, Michael MacLaren, Jack

Miller, Norm Scott, Laurie Smith, Todd
--

Yakabuski, John

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 87; the nays are 7.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1150 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Noah Kravitz, who's with the Furniture Bank organization in my riding.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to introduce a very good friend of mine, Scott Thurlow, from my riding of Ottawa South—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Boo!

Mr. John Fraser: Oh, my gosh, heckles already.

He's joined by Ron Lemaire, the president of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association. Also from the Canadian Produce Marketing Association is Sue Lewis, who organized today's Half Your Plate celebration, and Latitia Scarr and Jane Proctor. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTHY EATING

Mr. Toby Barrett: The Canadian Produce Marketing Association's Half Your Plate initiative is designed to encourage consumers to increase the portion of their meals devoted to fruit and vegetables.

Speaker, to be frank, North America—and certainly Ontario—has an obesity problem. The health costs associated with overweight people are significant, and promoting healthy choices is vital to improving health.

The success of initiatives like Half Your Plate obviously supports Eat Local, and certainly supports my riding's production of fruit and vegetables. I also think of the community-supported agriculture program run by Carron Farms in the Holland Marsh. They call it the Harvest Share Food Box and, in partnership with 50 other farms, distribute something like 500 boxes each week. I was up there this summer. Last season, Carron Farms shipped food boxes with 23,000 pounds of potatoes, 18,000 pounds of carrots, 15,000 pounds of corn, 12,000 pounds of apples and 10,000 pounds of onions.

Rural economic growth, reducing health care costs and promoting a healthier Ontario is something that all

parties should agree on. Let's see Ontario buy into this and make it part of the Healthy Living Platform.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, as you know, members' statements are usually used to highlight some of the good things that are happening in our ridings. Unfortunately, again I have to use my time to highlight what this Liberal government is doing when it comes to education, in particular in small, rural communities.

Harrow has been now put on notice that their community will lose the high school in Harrow, the only one, the one that is, really, a foundation, a pillar of that community. It's being torn apart after 10 years of being put on the chopping block and being under threat through the ministry and through the board of education.

Speaker, I'll read to you: According to the guidelines in the Education Act, "The Ministry of Education recommends that, wherever possible, schools should only be subject to a pupil accommodation review once in a five-year period, unless there are circumstances determined by the school board, such as a significant change in enrolment."

There has not been a significant change in enrolment at Harrow high. However, that high school has gone through a PARG three times in the last 10 years, not once every five years. Three times in the last 10 years they've been under threat. Imagine a community like that: How do you promote growth when you come into the town and your high school is always under threat of being cut? You ripped the heart out of that community.

I want to put the government on notice that the members of that community in Essex county are going to fight this decision tooth and nail. They will have me as an advocate. But unless they change the funding formula, which you campaigned on, the one that the Tories brought in, you're going to continue to rip the heart out of communities. Do something right: Change that funding formula and maintain those small, rural and remote schools.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

Mme Marie-France Lalonde: L'année 2015 fut forte en émotion. This year, 2015, has been rich in emotion as we celebrated 400 years of French presence in Ontario.

La communauté franco-ontarienne s'est réunie à Toronto du 22 au 24 octobre dernier lors de l'assemblée générale annuelle de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, l'AFO. Ce fut l'occasion de célébrer notre fierté franco-ontarienne et de nous rappeler nos racines, notre histoire et notre patrimoine. Ce fut aussi l'occasion de reconnaître certains individus pour leur apport et leur contribution à la francophonie ontarienne et canadienne.

Notre gouvernement, via l'Office des affaires francophones, a remis le Prix de la francophonie 2015 à Mariette Carrier-Fraser, à Mary Cruden et à la jeune slameuse Rym Ben Berrah. Congratulations.

Merci au président de l'AFO, Denis Vaillancourt, et à son directeur général, Peter Hominuk, pour le succès de leur AGA. Ils ont, quant à eux, récompensé : Jacques de Courville Nicol d'Ottawa, Prix du Pilier de la Francophonie; l'organisme Élargir l'espace, Prix de l'Horizon franco-ontarien; et Claudette Gleeson, Prix Florent-Lalonde.

Félicitations à tous les récipiendaires et un merci à ma collègue la ministre Meilleur pour son dévouement à la francophonie ontarienne.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I rise in the assembly today to celebrate national Hispanic day in Canada and in Spain. With all-party support, October is now proudly recognized in our province as Hispanic Heritage Month. My colleague from Huron-Bruce, Lisa Thompson, recently spoke in the House about the significance of that proclamation and about celebrating the rich history of one of Canada's and Ontario's most dynamic and fastest-growing communities.

On October 12, Hispanic people across the world celebrated Spanish National Day, or Fiesta Nacional de España. It focuses on the themes of peace and unity. This date was chosen to commemorate Christopher Columbus's first steps in the Americas on October 12, 1492.

I recently had the distinct pleasure of meeting the consul general of Spain, the Honourable Pablo Ruiz-Jarabo, and personally gave him best wishes on behalf of the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus.

There are now over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Canadians of Hispanic origin right here in the wonderful and diverse province of Ontario. On behalf of the official opposition, I hope people from across this assembly and Ontario have a wonderful Spanish National Day and a joyous month of celebrations and festivities during our inaugural Hispanic Heritage Month, and I congratulate them on their initiatives tomorrow.

SHINE THE LIGHT ON WOMAN ABUSE CAMPAIGN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Last week I was pleased to attend the London kickoff of the 2015 Shine the Light on Woman Abuse campaign, which takes place every November during Woman Abuse Prevention Month. The campaign was launched in 2010 by the London Abused Women's Centre and has since spread to 20 communities across Ontario, including Toronto, Ottawa and Niagara Falls.

The goals of the campaign are to raise awareness of woman abuse by turning the city purple for the month of November. This year, more than 30 London locations will be illuminated with purple lights, including once again my own constituency office.

The campaign lets women who experience violence know that their community stands in solidarity with them and that any shame and/or blame they may feel does not

belong to them but to their abuser. It also raises the profile of the community agencies that provide abused women with hope and help as they assert their right to live their lives free from the threat of violence.

This year's launch was attended by all 12 members of the London Lightning basketball team, along with team owner Vito Frijia. I want to commend the London Lightning for their strong leadership in engaging men in ending men's violence against women with their announcement that all seven teams in the NBLC will be working to shine the light on woman abuse in their respective communities.

Friday, November 13 is Wear Purple Day in London, but wherever you live in Ontario, I encourage all MPPs to wear purple in November by purchasing purple scarves from your local women's shelter.

1510

HALF YOUR PLATE INITIATIVE

Mr. John Fraser: I rise in this House today to highlight the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's Half Your Plate initiative. The goal of this program is to encourage Ontarians and other Canadians of all ages to consume more fruits and vegetables.

While it may make sense that people should be eating more fruits and vegetables, the reality is that it's not happening at all. In order to help improve the health of Canadians, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association has launched a consumer-driven initiative entitled Half Your Plate. Half Your Plate will empower Ontarians of all socio-economic groups to improve their food choices.

The goal of the program is to increase the number of servings of healthy foods Ontarians eat and to demonstrate how easy it can be to choose healthy options for meals and snacks. The Half Your Plate initiative has the support of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Heart and Stroke Foundation and many others. By promoting this initiative, we will be combating obesity and chronic diseases.

Eating more fruits and vegetables is good for our economy. It will have a positive economic impact for Ontario producers and will help reduce health care costs.

I ask that you join me in supporting Half Your Plate by coming to committee rooms 228 and 230 this evening. Chef Michael Smith will be demonstrating an easy-to-make recipe using fresh Ontario produce. It's as easy as it sounds: Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables when you eat.

OXI DAY

Mr. Robert Bailey: On October 28, members of the Greek community from around the world commemorate Oxi Day, the rejection by the Greek nation of the ultimatum made by Italian dictator Benito Mussolini on October 28, 1940, and the Hellenic counterattack against the invading Italian forces at the mountains of Pindus

during the Greco-Italian war and the Greek resistance during the Axis occupation.

On Sunday, October 25, I had the pleasure, along with the leader of our official opposition, Patrick Brown, to participate in the Greek parade along the Danforth to commemorate this historic event. The Greek community here in Ontario has thrived for over 100 years, contributing immensely to the political, economic and social fabric of our province. Be it in business or academia, Greeks have always played an important role in shaping our province's civic and cultural institutions.

Mr. Speaker, using my best Greek possible: Zito É Ellas; Zito to Ontario; Zito to Canada.

CIVIL ENGINEERS

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: On May 12, 2006, 16-year-old Skye Whitman was driving towards her Sudbury home after a late shift at work. It had been raining and suddenly the ground dropped away from beneath her tires. The car plunged and spun, bouncing violently. Skye Whitman was killed. The reason for this tragic accident was the collapse of a steel culvert under the road.

It is precisely because of stories like Skye's that I am so honoured to rise today to recognize Ontario's engineers, and in particular the work done by the geoengineering laboratory at Queen's. With funding from the federal and provincial governments, Queen's civil engineering professors Ian Moore and Richard Brachman will be able to conduct controlled experiments with a new and much larger deep burial simulator.

The simulator will be able to test how the deep burial of pipes affects their longevity. They will learn how to design and build durable, long-lasting and cost-effective buried pipe systems. It will be the only such system in the world. The research conducted at the lab will help engineers design water and sewer systems that will last longer, leak less and cause less disruption to the ground when repaired, with huge savings for municipalities and the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, engineers' work largely takes place behind the scenes and away from the public eye. Our everyday safety depends on their skill, diligence and hard work. Last week, I had the distinct honour of being acknowledged by Professional Engineers Ontario, but it is I who would like to acknowledge them for the work they do to make our communities safer every single day.

FURNITURE BANK

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to tell members about the Furniture Bank, an organization that's one of my neighbours in Etobicoke-Lakeshore, an organization that's tackling issues around poverty and homelessness. As I mentioned earlier, manager Noah Kravitz is here with us today.

Furniture Bank is a registered charity and social enterprise that's been helping people in the greater Toronto area since 1998. This organization takes in gently used

furniture and other household goods to help those who are transitioning to a new home or are newcomers to this country or who perhaps have had a tragic fire or other loss where they lost their possessions.

This organization also provides employment and training opportunities for young people and, recently, aboriginal youth, working together with the Miziwe Biik Aboriginal Employment and Training organization. They've received support from our own Ontario Trillium Fund to help them manage these initiatives that not only give some assistance but also help people find vocations for the future.

This coming week, they'll be auctioning off a refurbished sideboard and rustic chair to raise funds to help Syrian refugees who are coming to Ontario and Canada.

I offer to all members of the Legislature, please think of the Furniture Bank when you might have some gently used items you would like to discard.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENERGY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS SUR L'ÉNERGIE

Mr. Chiarelli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to amend several statutes and revoke several regulations in relation to energy conservation and long-term energy planning / Projet de loi 135, Loi modifiant plusieurs lois et abrogeant plusieurs règlements en ce qui concerne la conservation de l'énergie et la planification énergétique à long terme.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A brief statement?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: This legislation would enshrine a long-term energy planning progress that is transparent, efficient and able to respond to changing policy and system needs. It would support increased competition and enhance ratepayer value by empowering the Independent Electricity System Operator to competitively procure transmission projects. It would introduce two new initiatives to help Ontario families, businesses, and the province as a whole to conserve energy and water to manage costs.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion

without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 8 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General has moved that notwithstanding order 98(g), notice for ballot item 8 be waived. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The minister has requested unanimous consent. Agreed?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I move that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet in Toronto from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, November 9, 2015, for the purpose of holding public hearings on Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act.

1520

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General has moved that the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet in Toronto from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday, November 9, 2015, for the purpose of holding public hearings on Bill 73, An Act to amend the Development Charges Act, 1997 and the Planning Act. Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

LA VIOLENCE ET LE HARCÈLEMENT SEXUELS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise to discuss the sexual violence and harassment action plan and the introduction of legislation on this topic just yesterday.

Speaker, our action plan was developed with the guidance and advice of advocates, legislators and survivors. The expertise of these many voices has helped us to "get it right" and to continue the hard work to challenge ourselves, along with challenging the myths and

behaviours that are at the core of sexual violence and harassment.

Our action plan has also made progress in providing more support for survivors, improving safety in workplaces and on campuses, and emphasizing that we all have a role to play to end violence and harassment.

Je tiens à remercier les personnes, les organismes et les diverses collectivités de l'Ontario qui sont à nos côtés alors que nous faisons des progrès à l'égard des engagements que comprend notre plan d'action.

Many voices came forward and provided advice during the development of the action plan, and they've continued to share their wisdom regarding the proposed Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act. Speaker, if this is passed, the act will amend six existing acts so we can better support survivors of sexual violence and harassment in a number of ways. The proposed changes are as follows:

First, amend the Limitations Act to remove the limitation period for any civil sexual assault claim. This would encourage more survivors to come forward, regardless of how much time has passed since they became survivors of sexual assault.

Second, amend the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act to end the two-year time limit in which survivors can apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for compensation as a result of sexual or domestic violence.

Third, all Ontarians deserve, of course, to work in a safe and healthy environment. Our proposed legislation would amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to include a definition of workplace sexual harassment. It would require employers to address all complaints of workplace harassment, including sexual harassment, and take reasonable steps to ensure that employees experience zero harassment—sexual or otherwise—within the workplace.

Fourth, amend the Residential Tenancies Act to shorten the length of notice a tenant must give a landlord in situations where the tenant is fleeing domestic or sexual violence. Women, children, families: They all need to be able to leave an unsafe home as quickly as possible.

Fifth, amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Private Career Colleges Act so that every publicly funded college, university and private career college in Ontario must develop a stand-alone policy on sexual violence, and review that policy—with student input—every three years. Campus life is meant to be a special and enjoyed occasion, not to be spent in fear or apprehension.

Speaker, the campaign that began last March to end sexual violence and harassment has reached this legislative chamber, which gives voice to all Ontarians. Ensemble, utilisons nos pouvoirs législatifs pour protéger la population de l'Ontario contre la violence et le harcèlement à caractère sexuel.

En adoptant ces propositions, nous affirmerons clairement que la violence et le harcèlement à caractère sexuel ne sont pas tolérés.

In Ontario, sexual violence and harassment are never okay, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Responses?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to thank the minister responsible for women's issues for introducing Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act. It's certainly a positive step forward. Many aspects of the bill that we are going to look at when the bill goes through the House and through committee, I think, we had been discussing at the select committee. For those members who have been on the select committee, from all three parties, I want to thank them for their work. And I'd like to thank all the presenters who came forward, the voices of the women who came forward who have been in situations where they have felt they have not been able to come forward and get the appropriate help.

The select committee's final report is coming before the Legislature in the next few weeks, and I hope the government would also look at the recommendations that we'll be presenting and address those concerns in a meaningful way—the many recommendations that can be made to cover the multifaceted nature of domestic violence and sexual harassment.

Bill 132, the one that the minister has spoken about today, proposes to remove the limitation period for civil suits based on sexual assault or sexual misconduct. That means that victims can submit claims when they feel comfortable. Before that, there was a two-year limitation. That's something we certainly heard through the committee, also.

The bill also aims to remove the limitation period for survivors of sexual and domestic violence to file compensation applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, the statutory limitations, so survivors are afforded the time to come forward when they feel safe.

The bill is also going to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act. The definition of workplace sexual harassment will now be included, when it wasn't before, and certainly enhancing programs at the workplace and in consultation with businesses as we go forward, as we heard from the briefing, to make it safer for employees, but also for employers, to assist some of those small businesses with developing that policy.

The Residential Tenancies Act is going to be amended, allowing survivors to shorten the notice period to 28 days to terminate a lease where a tenant is fleeing from unsafe living conditions. That has been brought up in the Legislature before, by the present Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

The bill, I think, makes great strides in tackling the misogynistic attitudes and rape culture on our post-secondary campuses. Ontario students from elementary school to university often joke about rape and sexual assault and violence. The fact that our society has these very twisted perceptions about women at times, where they are treated as sexual objects, is certainly not acceptable, and that's part of the fact that we need to change the

culture. Every single Ontarian should be recognized for their intrinsic abilities alone.

Public colleges and universities will be mandated to have a stand-alone sexual violence policy, with student input, reviewed every three years. I want to commend the colleges especially for having that program up and going so quickly after we started the select committee and started the process of what we can do to address this. The universities, of course, are closely behind. So we have a lot of willing partners to make more positive steps forward.

I know that in light of the Ottawa Valley murders we were hoping to look at the bill and the fact of what had taken place there, especially this situation of probation officers and especially in rural Ontario and underserviced areas—how we can look at that.

The Partner Assault Response Program: We certainly heard a great deal in the select committee about the positiveness of that program and about the wait-list that exists for that program and how we could maybe come to some agreement, as we've been trying to do in the Legislature, on that topic.

Also, the recommendations of the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee's report from 2012, with some key recommendations, going forward, on when an offender, such as what happened in the Ottawa Valley, does not sign the probation orders, and the progressive enforcement that needs to follow up for that.

And, of course, human trafficking legislation: I'd like to see if we could consider adding a piece about having a coordinated approach to combatting human trafficking in the province of Ontario, similar to what I introduced in May, so that we can give more resources to police officers and survivors so that we can decrease the amount of human trafficking that exists in our province.

1530

Unfortunately, my time is up, but we know we're going to have a long time to speak to the bill that's been brought forward. I thank the minister again for bringing it forward.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise as NDP critic for women's issues to respond to the minister's statement on the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act.

First of all, I want to commend the minister for delivering on several of the commitments that were made in It's Never Okay, which was launched in March 2015. I'm glad to see that the decades of advocacy by front-line agencies and survivors have produced some concrete legislative changes that will improve the safety of Ontario workplaces and post-secondary campuses.

I also recognize the symbolic importance of launching this legislation on the eve of Woman Abuse Prevention Month in November. We know from around the world that violence against women is one of the key barriers to women's equality. A comprehensive legal framework to prevent sexual violence, to support survivors and help them heal, and to hold perpetrators accountable is a vital component in ending sexual violence and harassment in Ontario.

While this legislation represents a significant step forward, I am concerned as a member of the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment that other necessary amendments may never see the light of day. Additional recommendations for legislative changes are currently being finalized by the select committee for presentation to the Legislature on December 10, which is too late to be included in Bill 132. Those recommendations arise from the hundreds of hours of testimony that was provided to the committee; from the pain and the tears of survivors, who talked about the failures of our system; and from agency staff, who understand first-hand where the gaps are and how they need to be addressed.

Given the many different priorities that compete for time on the legislative agenda, I hope that Bill 132 does not close the file on the government's legislative response to sexual violence and harassment, because there are many other issues that need to be addressed. With research showing that fewer than 10% of sexual assault cases are ever reported to the police, it's vital to understand why people don't report. The select committee heard that many survivors do not go to the police because they fear they will be stigmatized and traumatized.

At the same time, we heard about the need for supportive alternatives to the legal system for survivors and the urgency of holding abusers accountable through other mechanisms than just the court system. We know from the brutal murders of three women in Renfrew county last month that there are limits to the ability of the justice system to truly protect women from sexual violence.

We can't lock up offenders forever. We must seek out ways to change the abusive behaviours that led to violence in the first place. That's why evidence-based programs like Partner Assault Response, or PAR, must be a critical part of a sexual violence action plan. It is why the government's own expert panel recommended in 2009 that PAR be strengthened, that it be delivered on a differentiated basis rather than one size fits all, and that it be made available to abusers who voluntarily want to change, instead of only those who are court-ordered.

It is troubling that at the same time progress is undeniably being made on sexual violence, warnings from experts and community leaders about recent changes to the Partner Assault Response Program are being ignored. Instead of acting on the 2009 recommendations about PAR, the Attorney General has watered the program down by reducing the number of sessions available to offenders. This is potentially creating a revolving door for abusers and putting women and children at risk.

The select committee heard over and over that domestic violence and sexual violence are intertwined. Whether a woman is sexually assaulted by her intimate partner or date raped by an acquaintance, she experiences the same life-shattering consequences: devastation, fear, guilt and shame. Yet siloed funding for sexual violence and domestic violence continues to limit the ability of community-based programs to provide integrated and coordinated responses. This must change.

In closing, New Democrats certainly welcome this legislation. However, we will continue to push for broader, systemic change to create a coordinated, integrated and survivor-led approach to the prevention of sexual violence and harassment, an approach that provides sustainable funding for front-line agencies to truly support survivors and engage in effective community-led public education and awareness campaigns, and that ensures trauma-informed responses at every point, from police, health care, education, social services and the justice system.

PETITIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the select committee, entitled Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario, was tabled in the Legislature on July 22, 2014;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That government of Ontario immediately review the final report and commence the implementation of the recommendations of the select committee, as contained in the final report."

Since I sat on that select committee, I support this petition. I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Shirley to take to the table.

DENTAL CARE

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

"To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it with page Julia.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai ici une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Marco.

EHLERS-DANLOS SYNDROME

Mr. Michael Harris: I have a petition to provide out-of-country treatments for Ehlers-Danlos patients, brought forward by Erika Crawford and her family—over 8,000 signatures here.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Canada Health Act requires provinces to fund medically necessary treatment for Canadians; and

“Whereas a growing number of people in Ontario suffering from Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (EDS) have to seek out-of-country treatment at their own expense because doctors in Ontario don't have the knowledge or skills to understand EDS symptoms and perform the required delicate and complicated surgeries; and

“Whereas those EDS victims who can't afford the expensive treatment outside of Ontario are forced to suffer a deteriorating existence and risk irreversible tissue and nerve damage; and

“Whereas EDS victims suffer severe dislocations, chronic pain, blackouts, nausea, migraines, lost vision, tremors, bowel and bladder issues, heart problems, mobility issues, digestive disorders, severe fatigue and many others resulting in little or very poor quality of life; and

“Whereas despite Ontario Ministry of Health claims that there are doctors in Ontario who can perform surgeries on EDS patients, when surgery is recommended the Ontario referring physicians fail to identify any

Ontario neurosurgeon willing or able to see and treat the patient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Require the Minister of Health to provide the names of Ontario neurosurgeons who can—and will—perform surgeries on EDS patients with equivalent or identical skills to the EDS neurosurgeon specialists in the United States, and meet the Canada Health Act's requirement to afford equal access to medical treatment for patients, regardless of their ability to pay for out-of-country services.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I'm going to sign it, as well as those other 8,000 people, and give it to Jade to take to the table.

1540

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has thousands of names coming from the northeast, including Muriel Kirwan, from Wahnapitae in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with gas price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Irene to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second most-frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I agree with the petition, and I'm affixing my signature to it and giving it to page Julia.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an industrial wind turbine development is to be constructed approximately 3.5 kilometres west of the village of Crysler by EDP Renewables; and

"Whereas the project will consist of 25-50 mega wind turbines and this has raised concerns by the citizens of Crysler and surrounding area related to health, safety and property values; and

"Whereas the Green Energy Act allows wind turbine developments to bypass meaningful public input and municipal approval;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment revise the Green Energy Act to allow full public input and municipal approvals on all industrial wind farm developments, and the Minister of the Environment conduct a thorough scientific study on the health and environmental impacts of industrial wind turbines."

I agree with this and will pass it to page Faith.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition entitled Better Mental Health Services.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

"Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

"Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

"Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

"Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

"Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

"(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

"(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

"(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

"(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario."

I sign this petition and give it to page Abby to deliver to the table.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

"Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

"Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

"Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

"Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

"Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je vous l'envoie avec page Soham.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Todd Smith: I have another stack of petitions from the Marmora area to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture has protected class 3 agricultural land from development for the purposes of projects under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas the United Nations has declared the vital importance soil plays in human civilization and protection of this vital resource; and

"Whereas the solar energy facility, SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, planned for Ledge Road, Clemenger Road and Twin Sister Road, in the municipality of Marmora and Lake will occupy agricultural land that has previously been protected against development under the Green Energy Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs take the necessary steps to ensure that projects, including the SunEdison Cordova Solar Project, that are on protected agricultural land are protected from large-scale, industrial energy development."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Julia E.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario called "Hydro One Not for Sale! Say No to Privatization," and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I couldn't agree more with this petition. I affix my name to it and will give it to page Irene to take to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "Planning for Ontario's future.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

"Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians."

I agree with this, and I will affix my name and give it to page Victoria.

1550

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's signed by thousands of people from my riding. It states:

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of Addington Highlands (AH) residents are against the introduction of industrial wind turbines (IWTs) into the township; and

"Whereas this position was confirmed through a council-sanctioned survey, which found that at least 81% of AH residents are against IWTs; and

"Whereas AH council ignored this and other survey results and subsequently rejected its sworn oath to honourably represent its constituents...;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario recognize Addington Highlands community as an unwilling host based upon the surveys of her residents, that there is no community support for IWTs in AH, and recognize that the current council has lost the confidence of the people on the matter of industrial wind turbines."

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time we dealt with this—it's now the NDP's lead. The member from Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's always a pleasure to rise in this House to talk about important issues, and there can be nothing more important than the health and safety of workers in the province of Ontario. So I want to speak

today to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Since becoming the labour critic earlier this year, I've spent many hours meeting with workers, with advocacy groups, with labour leaders and countless others to try and get an understanding of the complexity of the still unaddressed labour issues, workers' issues that people face in this province. These issues are particularly important to me because, as you know, I was a front-line nurse for 20 years, so I consider myself a worker. I represented nurses in that capacity as an elected union president, a health and safety representative—all different areas. I then went to work for the Ontario Nurses' Association, where I represented registered nurses and allied health professionals for another 20 years. So now I'm giving away my age.

I can tell you that I understand how important it is for all hard-working Ontarians in our province to have a good, stable job, a job that can support a family, one that they can rely on every week for a paycheque. However, the truth is that there are too many families across this province that are actually living in poverty, too many unable to climb out of poverty because of precarious work—work that has part-time hours, that is for temporary agencies that don't have enough regulation, or foreign temporary workers who aren't being monitored under federal regulations to ensure they have a safe work environment.

This happens even in good jobs in this province, Speaker. Precarious work can be in health care. CarePartners, for example, are still on strike after, I think, almost eight months working for a for-profit agency here in the province. They're on strike because of that precarious work. The way that they are being paid and their working conditions are not much different than the cannery factories of the 1950s and 1960s: running from house to house, not being paid for travel time, all of those kinds of things that are part of the precarious work situation and that become more prevalent each year in this province, not to mention the wait-lists that continue to grow for seniors in our province and other vulnerable groups in every one of our communities.

So there are lots of issues plaguing workers and there are not enough supports in place. To put it simply, Speaker, the Liberal government is failing to provide any recourse for workers across this province for many of these very important issues.

Too many workers in this province go to work without a guarantee that they won't come home injured. I think we had seven or eight falls where people actually lost their lives in 2014. Too many single mothers are struggling with temporary jobs, juggling a family, trying to get by. For over a decade, workers in this province have been lobbying for some simple improvements that would actually improve their work lives because they could join a union; things like automatic card certification, which we had back in 1990 and which the Liberal government gave to the construction industry. But all of the other workers in this province have to have a secret campaign,

sign their cards, file their application at the labour board and then fight with employers about whether or not they've signed enough cards. People want to join a union, they want to have a voice, they want to have somebody advocate for them, they want somebody to negotiate good wages, good benefits, a pension plan and working conditions.

I organized for the Ontario Nurses' Association full time for a period of about five years in the mid-1990s. The vast majority of nurses did not join a union because of wages or because of benefits. They joined because they felt disrespected and they didn't have a voice.

Taras, our member from Essex, introduced a bill in 2012, Bill 77, which would have seen a number of easy, progressive changes for the labour movement: automatic card certification, first contract arbitration—here we have these CarePartners nurses and support workers out on strike for eight months and they can't even get to a first contract arbitration, while we have hundreds of seniors on wait-lists waiting for care—a no-discipline certification process and something easy, like ensuring that your ESA rights are on posters in every workplace. The truth is that the hard-working people in this province shouldn't have to fight this hard to get these little fixes in the various pieces of legislation that affect workers in this province.

This bill was introduced at the tail end of the session last year. We know that it's kind of an omnibus bill, because it is dealing with a number of pieces of legislation. It's dealing with the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, it's dealing with the public sector labour relations act and it's dealing with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

It's interesting to me that all three of these are shoved into one bill, because on one hand, parts of it are pretty progressive: looking for improvements in occupational health and safety for all workers and giving firefighters in our province the same rights that other workers have under the Labour Relations Act.

But then there's this poison pill, under the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, where the government is proposing to take away the democratic right of workers in an amalgamation or merger of a school or a municipality or a hospital—to actually take away the rights—if they have less than 40% representation, so that they wouldn't have a right to vote for the union of their choice.

I don't know why the government has done this. In my view, I think they should split the bill or they should actually remove this piece because all it's doing is pitting some unions against some other unions, worker against worker. That's exactly what it is doing. I think I said this yesterday, when the Tories were up speaking to the bill: It is an infringement of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Under schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act: Basically this schedule just amends the FPPA by aligning it with the existing Labour Relations Act that governs most workers in the province. It would make

changes to that act around unfair labour practices, provisions that currently don't exist under the FPPA: membership in associations, expedited rights to arbitration, with modifications that take into account the unique nature of firefighters' labour relations.

It would amend the FPPA to address membership in associations in a number of ways. It would permit associations to require the inclusion of a closed shop in a collective agreement, mandatory dues, deductions and provisions requiring membership in the association, and it would give preference of employment to members of an association.

1600

It would also amend it by the addition of a range of prohibitions on unfair labour practices that don't currently exist in the act that governs firefighters in this province. Under "the duty of fair representation" obligation, it would ensure that the union is actually representing firefighters fairly in this province. That language doesn't currently exist under the FPPA.

On the introduction of an expedited rights arbitration process, similar to that found under section 49 of Labour Relations Act: Under that act, either party, the employer or the worker, can ask for an expedited process where there is a grievance, and the grievance has to be heard within 21 days. It's the appointment of a single arbitrator by the ministry, and it's to decide an unresolved grievance.

You'll know from your past life, Mr. Speaker, that it can sometimes take years to resolve a grievance. This expedited process, although it's good and it gets you to that hearing for the first day in 21 days, it doesn't mean that your second day, third day, fourth day of hearing—some grievance arbitrations can take that long—are going to happen in any speedy way. If you've got a simple grievance, you might get it resolved on that first day of arbitration and then you have to wait for your decision. But in my experience, having dealt with thousands of grievances over the years, that isn't always what happens. It all depends on whether the arbitrator is available on another date that is close by. It depends on the lawyers or the union representatives who are representing the worker in the grievance. So it isn't a given that you're going to get a decision in 21 days.

Further amendments would provide some religious exemption from paying dues. This issue is already contained in the Labour Relations Act. I can tell you, having organized about 5,000 nurses in my time with ONA, the issue of religious exemption is very minimal. It doesn't come up very often—I can really only recall once or twice. There was a merger between the Scarborough General Hospital and the Salvation Army Scarborough Grace Hospital. There were a couple of people who worked there who didn't want to pay union dues and thought they could have that addressed through the Labour Relations Act.

Bill 109 also provides that the changes will have some retroactive effect, as they will apply immediately to any ongoing matters that are before the OLRB. What that

means is that the bill was introduced on May 28, so if there are any issues currently at the Ontario Labour Relations Board and this bill is passed, then the effect would be made retroactive to that date. We know, however, that this Liberal government has a history of delaying bills and delaying the order of things in committee. They also have a history of time-allocating bills, time-allocating amendments, time-allocating clause-by-clause and preventing people who want to weigh in on an issue from having the right to come in and make presentations. I see one of my Tory colleagues nodding here, because we experienced that this week, actually, in social policy. If there are a lot of people wanting to weigh in on this bill, I would say, don't hold your breath, because it may not get to committee as soon as you think and you may never get a chance to weigh in because of the restrictive time-allocation ways of the Liberals in this majority government.

The second part of the bill is around the workers' compensation system. It would make a number of amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that we support. Having said that, I want to highlight the amendments that the government is proposing, and say that they certainly don't go as far as they should to make sure that workers are protected. After years and years of paying lip service to injured workers in this province, many of the amendments that are included here don't begin to cover the necessary changes that workers, advocacy groups, and consultants who have been hired to write reports have addressed over the last five to 10 years.

In his leadoff speech, the Minister of Labour stated that this schedule of the bill was "driven by our commitment to protect injured workers and their right to file a claim with" WSIB. If this commitment was real, we wouldn't have had to wait over five years for recommendations from a government-commissioned report on WSIB to start being implemented here today.

Over five years ago, the Liberal government's Ministry of Labour commissioned a report called the Dean report to look at occupational health and safety issues following the tragic death of a worker who fell while working on a high-rise platform right here in Toronto. This was over five years ago. Last year, there were seven more falls, and the recommendation from that report still wasn't implemented. Absolutely no movement has been made on any of the key recommendations of the report.

However, as New Democrats, we support the Fair Practices Commissioner that is proposed in this piece of legislation to serve as an ombudsman of the WSIB under this bill. The new commissioner would have the authority to investigate complaints and to make recommendations—effective recommendations, I hope, and, I hope, some authority to enforce—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is a little loud over there.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —the government to enshrine into legislation or regulation.

I look forward to seeing this ombudsman, this Fair Practices Commissioner, come into practice. But there are some questions that we need to ask ourselves before we get into that committee. Who determines how that person will be appointed? What criteria would establish them as being viable candidates, or would they just be a friend of the Liberals? Lastly and most importantly, would the commissioner be appointed by unanimous agreement of the parties, which is the case here with most legislative officers of this House?

The issue of claims suppression is a huge issue. The bill would amend the act to provide protection to employees who have filed, or intend to file, a claim for benefits due to workplace accident or injury by prohibiting employers from filing claims influencing or inducing workers to withdraw or abandon claims.

I have a little story here, Speaker. In probably the mid-2000s, I would say it was, I was representing nurses who worked for the Niagara Health System. You've all heard about the Niagara Health System over the years. It's the largest health system in the province. Eight hospitals came together; it has never worked.

In any event, at that time, I was doing the servicing for the Ontario Nurses' Association. A couple of nurses brought to our attention that when they tried to get paid for an incidental sick day, where they were off sick with the flu or a cold, they were told by their managers in the occupational health department that they didn't have any sick days in their bank.

In the hospital sector, they work under a system of a short-term and a long-term disability plan. Under the short-term plan, you have 15 weeks of short-term, and then you move to a long-term plan that can go up to two years in your own occupation, and longer in any occupation.

These were people who had injuries in the past. When we started to investigate it, there were 700 workers in the Niagara Health System, both from ONA and SEIU, the support workers, who had not had any lost-time claims reported by the occupational health department of the Niagara Health System to WSIB.

All of these people were at risk somewhere down the road. So we called in WSIB, and they investigated the Niagara Health System. At the end of the day, we had all of these people's sick banks reinstated, because what they had done was, while these people were off with their injuries, they had used their sick banks. They had not claimed any lost time for them—even though some of them were off eight weeks, 10 weeks, 15 weeks—and used their banks. Then when they went to use a sick day, that's when we found out what they had done.

1610

You know what? It was a terrible thing to find out that an employer was so blatantly doing this across the board, but at the same time getting experience-rating rebates back for a couple of million dollars. That happens across the province.

I know that this happens, and I also know individually from speaking to nurses over the years that many times

they're encouraged—somebody injures themselves, they need to go for surgery and they're encouraged by their managers, not just in health care but everywhere, to use their sick time: "It'll be easier to get the money. You won't have to wait that three weeks or four weeks to get compensation." The problem is that if you don't recover in the period of time that you normally would recover, for whatever reason, you then will be reduced to long-term disability benefits, at a much lower rate than you would have received through compensation.

Claims suppression is a huge problem in this province. Many workers have reported implied threats when an employer offers to continue a worker's wages instead of reporting. Claims suppression results in many injuries not being reported, and often, workers are brought in to work just to sit at a desk and do nothing so that the employer does not have any lost-time claims.

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers, a group that's no stranger to the Legislature. It's headed, as we know, by Karl Crevar, who so pointedly highlighted how not only problematic but costly claims suppression is. Injured workers and their families are the ones forced to bear most of the brunt of those costs and those injuries, as well as our public systems that people pay taxes for, our ODSP and Ontario Works system. So on one hand, we're not paying them their compensation benefits, but then we end up paying it out of another pocket.

It can be subtle, it can be hidden, and it's difficult to know when it happens unless workers actually report it. A WSIB-funded study said that at least 8% of work-related injuries and illnesses are either not reported or misrepresented when they are reported, because of the lost-time injuries and not wanting to report that. As many as 10% of the cases aren't reported at all. So there's reason to believe that it's widespread.

In a recent funding review of WSIB by Professor Harry Arthurs, he describes WSIB's failure to address claim suppression as a "moral crisis." On May 12, that report came out, and it's taken three years to get to here today just to bring a bill forward that will address some of this issue.

He recommended that WSIB commit to making the changes necessary to protect workers against claims suppression and other abuses related to the experience-rating piece. He said at the time that it was so significant that he recommended that it be done within 12 months. But here we are, three years—and by the time it's done, it will probably be closer to four years.

He went on to say: "Unless the WSIB is prepared to aggressively use its existing powers ... to prevent and punish claims suppression, and unless it is able to vouch for the integrity ... of its experience rating programs, it should not continue to operate them."

Once again, Speaker, claims suppression on this side equals rebates that employers shouldn't be getting on that side. At a time when we say that WSIB's liability is underfunded, we're paying out millions of dollars to employers who may or may not be suppressing claims.

Claims management is also a problem under the current system. If this government refuses to look at this issue for its most vulnerable workers, then the financial costs continue to rise there as well. This is when employers take an adversarial approach to workers' claims, or to workers returning to work, to try and limit their responsibility. They accuse workers of exaggerating their symptoms. They appeal claims. They hire private investigators to monitor injured workers. They withhold supporting evidence, and I experienced that as well, in my time representing nurses, where someone would have an injury and then, all of a sudden, when you would get a file, the employer reported, "Well, that woman played piano for 20 years"—which had nothing to do with the injury that she had to her hand or her arm—trying to throw things in there that might ensure that the claim didn't get supported.

They pressure workers to return to work early on modified work, even when they're not ready, to try to avoid those loss claims, and terminate workers' employment once further claim costs would no longer affect their premiums.

I've experienced that as well, where once that \$250,000 premium that the employer had to pay because of that injury was gone, they were then pushing the workers out the door.

The claims management rules of workers' compensation make this an adversarial system, undermining the Meredith principles that compensation was first set up under. It stigmatizes and marginalizes workers, and it further undermines their health, because they may be off with a physical problem, but when they have to go through all of these issues in this way, it then affects their mental health as well.

There's also evidence that this even goes as far as hiring practices, where there are employers who avoid hiring anybody who may have had an injury, or has some disability. They fear that because they were injured on the job once, they'll be off again and the premium costs will actually go up.

The prohibitions, the good pieces of this bill, extend to make sure that all manner of promises, threats and discipline, including terminations, suspensions and otherwise imposing a penalty on workers will end. A new monetary penalty—amount to be prescribed by regulation—would apply any time that the fine could be imposed by the court if the employer was found guilty of an offence.

We're certainly keen to see what that penalty is going to be, but I would suggest that it needs to be significant. Just like the quadrupling of the fine from \$100,000 to \$500,000 under this bill, I think that the penalty for intimidating employees to not file claims should be significant, because at the same time, employers have been receiving huge amounts of dollars—millions and millions of dollars—in experience-rating benefits.

The further change is that the maximum fine would be increased from \$100,000 to \$500,000. We're pleased to see, over five years of seeing this recommendation come in, that the government is finally taking steps to make

sure that the penalty actually sends a message that workers need to be protected in the workplace.

The third interesting piece of the schedule is an amendment that would eliminate the deemed net average earnings provision currently applicable when calculating the level of survivor benefits payable in cases where workers have no net average earnings on the date of injury.

This actually comes out of the bill that the member from Oshawa put forward a month or so ago. So, rather than applying the statutory minimum amount—there is a minimum of \$15,312.51 per year, a benefit to survivors—it is being amended in this piece of legislation. It would be the net average earnings of workers engaged in the profession as the deceased worker at the time that the injury first arose. This could be a good thing or a bad thing, depending on how much money your net average earning was at the time that the injury first arose, if it was quite a long time ago. I personally think there should be at least a minimum, and then your average net earnings after that, but that's certainly something we can look at putting an amendment into.

The other piece of this legislation is that it would apply retroactively to any injury that occurred on or after 1998, but not before, which is problematic.

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It permits survivors to request the WSIB to reconsider decisions already rendered, and the ability to refile claims with WSIB that have already been determined. I'd like to highlight that, despite knowing about these two issues for over five years, the government has been really slow about bringing these changes forward.

The issue of claims suppression and increasing fines to employers found guilty of WSIB breaches was inspired by Harry Arthurs back in 2010. He also was asked to make recommendations on how it could reduce or eliminate its unfunded liability.

Christine Arnott, who was a spokeswoman at the time, committed to review the program and draw on the report's recommendations. Speaker, there were more than two recommendations; there were numerous recommendations. But to date, a mere two are being acted upon out of that report that's been collecting dust for so many years.

Eliminate the experience rating; the claims suppression piece; deal with WSIB's tracking of worker complaints; conduct random audits; training WSIB staff. These are all things that are really good recommendations, but they're not being dealt with in this piece of legislation.

Every employer, he also said, should be required to designate a health and safety compliance officer, a person who ensures that the company, the employer, actually complies with the act. There is nothing in this piece of legislation that deals with that.

In his report released last May, Arthurs confirmed that non-reporting is widespread, and he called for greater monitoring of companies and increased financial penalties for claims suppression. That's actually happening, Speaker.

To the occupational disease piece: Section 48.1 is a very close rendition of the member from Oshawa's bill, which she introduced three weeks before the government tabled this legislation. Her bill moved to close existing loopholes in WSIA that allow the victims of occupational disease and their spouses to be denied loss-of-earnings and survivor benefits. It would reinstate loss-of-earnings benefits for workers diagnosed with occupational diseases after retirement and eliminate a technicality in the act that currently allows those benefits to be drastically reduced.

It would provide death benefits to be paid to survivors when a worker dies due to an injury for which the worker would otherwise have been entitled to benefits under the insurance plan. We know that since 2011 there have been at least 14 of these tribunal decisions that have resulted in a reduction of pensions to the surviving spouses of workers who have died of occupational illnesses. All workers in this province are susceptible to an occupational disease. For example, if a steamfitter, a miner or a firefighter was diagnosed after they retired, then their widow's survivor benefits would be in question.

I think the catch in there was the word "earnings." Some smart lawyers for the government, I guess, picked up on that word "earnings" and went by the letter of the law with respect to the definition of the word "earnings"—as opposed to people collecting their pension, as opposed to the spirit of the legislation, which was to make sure that survivors, the spouses of people who died from occupational illness, would be able to support themselves and their families after their spouses died. Unfortunately, the lawyers won the argument. This is what the member from Oshawa's bill is reaching to correct. It is addressed in Bill 109, but it is a kind of half-measure. It's watered down.

I'm going to borrow from the words of the member from Oshawa herself by saying that it is unconscionable that we have allowed even more to be taken from the spouses of injured workers or workers who had occupational diseases who have passed on, and to let this go on for so long despite the pleas of workers and their families and of advocacy groups across the province who believe that the spirit of the legislation was to ensure protection for them. So employers hope that workers retire before diagnosis so that they aren't eligible for the loss-of-earnings payment.

Interestingly enough, my colleague's bill doesn't have a date or time stamp, which the government's bill does. The government's bill says "January 1998"; the member from Oshawa's bill didn't have any date. This is actually problematic, because as a registered nurse, I saw firsthand how latent illnesses are—with some diseases, it can be 50 years. Talk about illnesses like asbestosis—which you would know, Speaker, from your days in the steel mill—COPD, nickel plant sinus cancers—people retired and developed sinus cancers 40 or 50 years after their work ended. Presumptive cancers for firefighters: We have presumptive legislation in the system for our firefighters, which is good, but we don't have that same

kind of presumptive legislation for steelworkers, for miners, for many people who actually come in contact with many chemicals and carcinogens—

Interjection: Every day.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —every day which may impact them much later than 17 years, which is what the bill is proposing.

There was this man in Niagara Falls—the member from Niagara Falls is here today—whose name was Mr. Mancuso. He fell into a vat of chemicals, probably about 30 years ago, in Niagara Falls. Everything should have happened right there on site. Unfortunately, the man was dead almost immediately. The skin burned off the bone. His body was—911 was called, so now we have the police, the firefighters and the paramedics all involved with this chemical issue and the body of this man, this deceased man. They take the body to the hospital, to the emergency department, and wheel him through the emergency department, and so now we have the nurses, the clerical staff, the housekeepers and any patients that happened to be in the emergency department exposed.

I can tell you that in my time representing the nurses at the Niagara Health System, this issue has come back to haunt those workers. We invited in OHCAW, the occupational health clinics. They have come in and they've interviewed many of the workers who were exposed on that day. Some of them went off work fairly recently after that accident happened, but many of them still working now have developed COPD and different respiratory ailments—not only the hospital workers but the firefighters as well. To put this date of 1998 in—that situation happened 30 years ago, and those workers as well need to have a right to go back and access those survivor benefits in the event that they die.

Labour experts across the province have weighed in on both pieces of legislation, and they agree that our private member's bill from the member from Oshawa is certainly a better piece of legislation. We'll likely be proposing some amendments when we get to committee.

Now I want to move on to the piece about PSLRTA, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. This is the poison pill that's in the bill. That rhymes, Speaker: poison pill that's in the bill. On one hand, we're proposing legislation that is great, that is going to assist our firefighters here in the province, and we're proposing legislation that is going to improve the lives of injured workers in this province, or workers in general. But on this side, we're actually going to fly in the face of democracy and our Charter of Rights by denying workers the right to vote for the union of their choice. This piece of legislation actually came in under the Harris government when they were trying to merge municipalities and hospitals and school boards and—

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Mr. Wayne Gates: Everything.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Everything. There was a list; there was an A list and there was a B list. I remember; I was on council at the time, and we were actually on the B list. We were kind of the next hit in Niagara to merge 12

municipalities into one, like they did in Toronto and they did in Hamilton, and they did in Haldimand–Norfolk. I can't remember where else—maybe Ottawa. Did they in Ottawa? I can't remember. So we were on the list, but, anyway, after a few—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Almonte and Ramsay townships.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. After a few by-elections during this period and a loss for the Conservatives of most of those seats, Mike Harris stopped that process, and it didn't continue.

Anyway, out of that came this Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. It was a process put in place so that, if you were represented by a union, or if different groups of people were represented by different unions—say two hospitals were merging, for example, or eight hospitals, like in Niagara—there would be a systematic process to determine who was going to represent those workers at the end of the day. It included non-union workers as well, so that non-union people would also have their democratic right to either vote for a union or not vote for a union. It got expanded. Initially, it just talked about hospitals, but then it got expanded to the health care sector as hospitals started to kind of divest themselves of other-than-core services. So it now applies to most of the health care sector.

In any event, what it really does is it pits unions against unions. I don't know why the government, actually, is even introducing this bill. I haven't heard from any employers—I haven't heard from anyone who actually has been affected by this or thinks that this is a burning issue. In fact, there have only been two votes in the last two years in the health care sector—one in 2014 and one in 2015—where there were two or three different unions representing health care workers, and a vote took place. The process is not onerous. I've been at the labour board many times over the years on this issue.

In some cases, the unions, when they only had a few members, voluntarily took their names out of the race. An example was the city of Toronto, which took in Toronto, Scarborough, East York, York, North York and Etobicoke. In that situation, CUPE had large bargaining units at the city of Toronto, like 10,000 inside workers and 10,000 outside workers. The Ontario Nurses' Association had six, small registered-nurse bargaining units. There's no way we were going to win that vote, and so, at the end of the day, we weren't even on the ballot, right?

I haven't heard that there are employers complaining about this. I had never heard the minister or his parliamentary assistant even say which stakeholders brought this issue forward, but I can tell you that most of the major stakeholders have told me that they are certainly opposed to this issue.

Under the PSLRTA—there used to be successor rights under the Labour Relations Act that don't really exist any longer, except under this PSLRTA legislation. So for care partners, for example—I'll use them again, those nurses that are still on strike eight months later, with the government not even intervening to assist them. In that

situation, in the past, if nurses were in VON, for example, and VON closed down for some reason, you would have had successor rights when the new agency actually opened up. But that ended with this PSLRTA legislation, which is why we ended up with very few VON agencies across the province. The little bit of work that they do have today is more shift nursing than it is community care. But the merger, the time that it took at the labour board, was not that onerous.

The government is proposing that if you don't have 40% of the members, you don't have the right to a vote. I can tell you that in many of the votes that I was involved in, it wasn't always the 60% that won the vote. There were many situations where maybe people decided they wanted to make a change. They weren't necessarily happy with their current representation, or they wanted to be in a nursing union, as opposed to being in a large, wall-to-wall bargaining unit that had everything from clerical and cleaners right up to IT people and health care professionals.

There have been all kinds of different votes. There was a vote at one hospital in the province where the union that only had 100 workers won a 2,000-member bargaining unit. People actually had the right to express their freedom of choice in those situations and to pick the union they wanted.

I think that at the end of the day, there will be a charter challenge on this piece of legislation. Recently, in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police case in the Supreme Court—that was where the Royal Canadian Mounted Police wanted to be unionized, and the employer didn't want them to be unionized. The charter guarantees a meaningful process of collective bargaining, which includes a process that provides an employee with a degree of choice and independence—there's the key, Speaker: a degree of choice and independence—sufficient to enable them to determine their collective interests and meaningfully pursue them.

The court noted that the hallmarks of employee choice include the ability to form and join new associations, and to change representatives, which is exactly what this PSLRTA section in Bill 109 is about. If you're going to take away 40% of people's rights to choose, then I don't think it would actually pass the test in a charter challenge.

The decision of the court was also to set and change collective workplace goals, to dissolve existing associations, and accountability to the members of the association is an important element of choice.

I'm of the view, and others—legal experts—are of the view that the proposed amendments to the PSLRTA would not stand a charter scrutiny. By depriving union members of the union of their choice on the basis that they fell below an arbitrary minimum percentage—in this case, 40%—of a newly integrated bargaining unit is an unnecessary infringement of their charter right to the union of their choice. Really, Speaker, it is totally unnecessary. There have been no problems for 19 years, I think it is, under the current provisions. Yes, sometimes

the unions got a little ticked at each other through the process, but at the end of the day, it's all about democracy and the right of an individual worker to choose who they want.

When I looked at the legislation—I see that the government is still proposing that if you're non-union and you make up 40%, you still have the right to vote, which is really strange, because you only have to have 50%-plus-one of workers in an organizing drive to unionize. Here, you're saying that 40% of a non-union group of workers could get rid of a union, and that doesn't make any sense in the process. But on the other hand, if workers have 40% in a union, and the other union has 60%, in that case, those 40% unionized workers don't even get a vote. So it doesn't fly, in the face of democracy, in my opinion.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Who came up with this bill?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't know who came up with this bill.

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Anyway, as I say, there are tons of examples. I'm sure that there will be lots of examples coming forward to the government during the presentations when this bill actually gets to committee. But I can tell you, in the years that I was involved at the labour board, there were some situations where there were three unions involved.

I remember one of the CCACs—when the government moved the CCACs from 42 down to 14, there were representation votes. I think it was somewhere here in Toronto; I think it was in York. There was a CUPE bargaining unit, a COPE bargaining unit and an ONA bargaining unit. I think CUPE and ONA had around 40%; it might have been 39%—whatever. COPE only had 20%, and they won the vote. At the end of the day, they won the vote in that region to represent all of those workers in York region in the CCAC. So small doesn't necessarily mean that you can't win at the end of the day.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Interesting.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, it is very interesting.

I'm going to spend the last bit of my time just speaking about the consultations. We talk about all the kinds of labour issues that are important to people. I have to tell you that there were consultations held this summer around the Employment Standards Act—and I think there are going to be some more held around the Labour Relations Act—but the problem with these consultations were that they were not open to the public. Here, we have people coming all the time making presentations to us around various bills in committee, and they're open to the public. Anybody can come in there and sit and listen. But these consultations were not open to the public. If you weren't making a presentation to this panel, you weren't able to actually be there.

The other part of it, Speaker, that is problematic is that the presentations went to this panel, so no one else has any access to this information unless we actually go and—we don't even know who presented to the panel, at this point in time, unless somebody has brought it to our

attention and provided us with a copy. I don't think that is good representation of our constituents when we, as elected officials, can't even sit in on one of these summits. I guess it was a summit, a summit panel. It's problematic. It's certainly problematic for me. They were not all across the province. For example, there was nothing in Sudbury until the member from Nickel Belt actually requested it. I know that we put on record that we should have something in Niagara, because the closest, I think, was in Hamilton, but that didn't happen.

I did actually have a story to share about the ESA consultation that was held right here in Toronto last summer. This woman of Filipino descent recounted a profound and compelling deputation around her own struggles being an at-home caregiver. I'm told the presentation was so persuasive and gripping that she had most of the room in tears, Speaker. When she wrapped up her presentation, the two ministry officials, who were both male, both white, sitting at the front of the room, thanked her for her presentation, while one proceeded to recount that though her presentation was persuasive and while he "emphasizes," he was fairly certain it didn't speak to the experience of all home caregivers, since being someone who "had a child care provider at home, has experienced his own share of problems with them."

This, Speaker, is not only a terrible kind of feedback but a prime example of what happens when class, race and gender intersect. If these were the kinds of people who were sitting at the front of this panel and that was the kind of response that the people making presentations got, it's no wonder why people don't come forward to continue to make these presentations. That was kind of an unsolicited recounting of how this woman felt when she left that panel.

And so we're still waiting to hear what the various presenters—whether they were individuals, unions or advocates for people living in poverty, people in precarious work or temporary agencies. We're still waiting to see what those recommendations are that come out of there. I don't know how long that will take, but if it's anything like the Arthurs Report or the Dean Report, it may be years.

The precarious employment piece continues to be big and continues to grow and grow in this province. Scheduling temporary work—it used to be that you couldn't get a home office; it was very difficult. But employers today don't even want to carry the expense of actually having people in an office, so people are at home using their own hydro and their own computers—part-time work, no benefits, no pension. Those are very important issues for the people in this province, and we see that every quarter, when the job stats come out through the federal government and provincially. Although more jobs are being created, the vast majority of those jobs are actually part-time work that doesn't pay benefits, doesn't have a pension, doesn't have any job security and can't support families and feed kids.

I met with the Workers' Action Centre earlier this year to highlight some of the issues of their report, which is

Still Working on the Edge. Shortly thereafter, we also attended the launch of their report Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario Project: The Precarity Penalty. The results were compelling, Speaker.

These are important labour issues that need to be addressed. Our Employment Standards Act is severely outdated. We know that the act is not enforced as it should be, because there are not enough enforcement officers in place to make sure that that happens. We hear about people all the time who have not received their overtime pay or have not received their paid holiday pay, and then they're terminated by the employer and they have to jump through hoops to try to go back and get those kinds of things in place.

The hours-of-work standards allow for longer workdays and workweeks than most other jurisdictions: 60 hours. We say that we're a progressive government here—and I know that the 60 hours was brought in, I think, under the Tory government. But if we're so progressive, is 60 hours a quality life for anyone? I think not. I think there are many issues that need to be addressed that haven't been addressed in many, many years.

We know as well that there are huge social impacts from not having up-to-date legislation and from not having the appropriate legislation in place for workers in this province and for those living in poverty and those living on the margin. As the former critic for community and social services for a couple of years, I've seen firsthand what happens to people when they don't have secure jobs. Even when they do have secure jobs that perhaps pay a decent wage, the work can often be precarious; it's part-time.

You'll hear it all the time in the health care field, whether it's in the community or in the hospital. People can't get full-time jobs. Their spouses, perhaps, were employed in the manufacturing industry and they were the main breadwinner, and now their spouse is the main breadwinner, so they need full-time jobs so that they can have those benefits and protections in place. I'm sure it doesn't come as a surprise to anybody here that there is a direct correlation between social outcomes and those with access to good-paying jobs here in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to conclude by saying that although this bill provides some improvements under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act piece and under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—although they can be tweaked some as well—we've taken a massive step backwards with respect to democracy for workers in this province, for the ability for them to vote for the union of their choice when there is a merger or amalgamation.

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And it isn't just a merger or amalgamation; we see the non-core programs of hospitals now moving out to the community. So you may have, for example, in the hospital sector, case managers who were social workers who worked in the hospital but now they've been transferred over to the CCAC, and wouldn't have the right for a vote in this particular situation. And many of

those are moving from a big hospital setting out to a smaller community setting.

I think the government is not really serious about improvements to labour laws, and it's not focused on helping the very workers in this province who need it the most. This bill simply pits one union against another by adding a progressive amendment to a bill that is being supported by firefighters, while ensuring that it's entwined with a bill that is problematic for a number of major unions in this province and will take away the democratic rights of many workers in this province.

Thank you for the opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I would urge all members of the House to support Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act.

If I might, Speaker, with your permission, speak a little bit about the medical side. We use the phrase "presumptive diagnosis," and perhaps that deserves some explanation. Let's take the case of firefighters who may have had difficulty in proving that it was job-related stress, job-related fumes or chemicals, particles or inhalants that might have caused COPD, chronic obstructive lung disease. "Presumptive" means that we should naturally assume that, with a given amount of time that a firefighter has exposed themselves potentially to these illness-causing materials, the COPD is, in fact, caused by this and therefore it should be a compensatable kind of illness.

The problem, of course, is that these illnesses often take years, possibly even decades, to manifest, to show. For example, if you are interested in developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, the ideal way is to smoke one pack a day—your choice of cigarettes—but it would take, on average, approximately 20 years to develop. So, between time of employment, time of exposure, when and where precisely the exposure happened, and then to essentially attribute that to 20 years hence or even longer is, of course, the issue. We want to make sure that this type of bill helps with these types of issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments

Mr. Robert Bailey: I want to commend the member from Welland. She obviously knows the labour community and the issues, especially in her profession of nursing. I was very interested. I listened quite closely about claim suppression and learned some new details there—it doesn't surprise me—and about the issues about the percentage not reported and about the claims rebate to employers for underreporting. All of those are good points. If they can be proven true, then we certainly need to address that.

I came out of the labour community as well before I got elected. I was a member of two locals. It certainly brought back thoughts about the days of organizing, when people were trying to bring the labour movement into a couple of different places that I was employed at, and eventually they were successful. I was a member of

that union at that time—two locals at the time. Then I crossed over to the dark side and went into management before I got elected. Maybe I went to the dark side when I got elected. That might be a better way of putting it.

It comes as no surprise that at second reading, we intend to support this bill. We want to see it go to committee, and we'll certainly make many amendments there. I'm sure the third party will as well, and probably some of the government members. They're probably not happy with the outcome of this bill as well.

I look forward to having an opportunity and I know many of my colleagues intend to speak to this today. Anytime we can do something to improve the law for the people that work in this province every day and make this the great province it is, I think we should take that opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to say a few words. This is the second time I've been here and we've talked about this bill. We talk about the firefighters that are in this bill. Yes, the firefighters are supported and, yes, you had some consultation with them and, yes, the firefighters understand more than anybody what it's like to put out fires and be exposed to chemicals and have their colleagues years later end up with cancer.

A young gentleman, Tim Hoday from Niagara Falls, we just buried him a couple of months ago. He had cancer, leukemia, that was caused by the workplace. So we understand that the firefighters would like to see this put in place. What we don't understand is why it's not a separate bill. Why are you putting firefighters in a position to pit unions against unions, workers against workers? It makes absolutely no sense. In my talking to the firefighters, they're in agreement. They just want to get their issues taken care of. So let's take them out of this bill and put it over here and say, "Let's take care of the firefighters." That's what we need to do.

I'm going to try to read this quickly. This is what's coming from the Liberal side: "We're trying to increase the level of fairness by strengthening protections for all of these workers, and we will ensure that the broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible"—and this is the key issue and I want all of the Liberals to listen to this, particularly those that have never worked with unions before—"while still balancing the democratic rights of workers."

That's what it's about. It's about saying to workers that if you want to have a merger, you have a merger. But those same workers should have the right to choose who's going to represent them. Whether it be SEIU, whether it be CUPE, whether it be the auto workers, Unifor—it doesn't matter. Those workers should have that right to choose who they want to represent them once they've merged.

I think it's very clear in this statement here: "while still balancing the democratic rights of workers." Give workers the right to choose who they want to have represent them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I just want to make a couple of general comments on the speech from the member from Welland. Obviously, she showed a lot of passion from her former profession coming here. I would say that, in many cases, she made some right points, and in some cases I think we kind of wandered off.

I think it's important we deal with this. Let's get it to committee and let's move on. I'm sure some of the comments we're debating here in this House will reflect the committee, both from folks coming in to talk to us and members as well.

So just a couple of things that I think we need to talk about: Actually, the member from Sarnia highlighted that anytime we can improve the workplace and the safety of workers, regardless of whether they're firefighters, or regardless of whether they're municipal employees or whatever the case may be, I think it's an improvement.

When we talk about the protection we're enhancing for the firefighters, I think it's a good thing. Will we ever get to the end of making a perfect world? I'm not so sure, because our predecessors that had the privilege to sit in this place did the right thing when they did it a number of years ago, and as we move on, we keep on looking for improvements.

This is certainly something that I think we need to wrap our hands around, wrap our brains around. Let's get to it to committee after second reading, and let's see if we can refine it even more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland has two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: First, I'd like to thank the members from Etobicoke, Sarnia-Lambton, Niagara Falls and Northumberland-Quinte West.

We support some parts of this bill, but we certainly do not support the part about taking away the democratic rights of workers to vote for the union of their choice.

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The member from Etobicoke talked about presumptive illness. I'm well aware of presumptive illnesses, but putting a date in there of January 1998 for people to actually go prove their case to the WSIB and the impact that will have on survivor benefits, when we all know—he talked about, if you smoked two packs a day for five years, you may not have anything show up for 30 years. So I think it's important that that date needs to be removed from that legislation.

The member from Northumberland-Quinte West said that it's an improvement. It's an improvement for firefighters, which we support, and it's an improvement for workers under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, but certainly not an improvement for the many, many thousands of workers in this province who will find themselves without the right to choose the union of their choice, as this government continues to roll services out of hospitals into communities. There are representation votes at the end of that process.

If you ask any unionized member in this province whether they're affected by this or not, they would say,

"Workers have the right to choose their union." The Supreme Court decision on the RCMP says that, and I think that this could end in a charter challenge which, maybe, this government is interested in getting into.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I'm looking forward to speaking to the bill. I'd like to share my time with the member for Barrie, the member for Davenport and the member for Durham.

Speaker, I think about this bill, and there's a number of components to it. I won't be able to speak to them all, but there are a few that I'd like to highlight and speak to that I think are important and meaningful.

The first thing I want to say about this bill is that I think it has been pulled together in a very thoughtful way in the interests of workers of our province, including firefighters, but I also think it's pragmatic; it's implementable. It's designed not only to ensure that workers are protected, but to do it in a streamlined, efficient and more effective way. I think that that's good. That's not only good for the taxpayer, but I think it's good for the people who are involved in the process to make sure that that process is as quick, yet thorough, as possible.

I want to start by talking about the people who serve as firefighters in our fire departments across the province. Recently, I had the opportunity to meet some of the firefighters who serve in my community of Etobicoke Centre. I had a chance to get to know them a little bit and to speak with some of them about the wonderful work that they do. One of the details actually came out when they volunteered their time when I was holding one of my summer barbecues in the riding, and we invited people from across the community to come for the barbecue as an opportunity for me to meet them. The firefighters came out, and they just pulled up with a truck in the parking lot and kids from the neighbourhood came along and either those who were at the barbecue went to the truck or those who came to the truck then came to the barbecue—either way, they came and they helped out.

We talked a little bit about the job and the risks that they take on in their work and some of the injuries that some of them have faced, and some of their colleagues have faced, I should say, over the years. In any event, that's why I think it's so important that we put in place the appropriate labour protections for our firefighters. These people, of course, work very, very hard, but they also put their lives on the line to save others, and we owe it to them to do that.

I think the amendments that are being proposed here would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act and provide additional tools to resolve disputes, again, reducing remedies that are required through the courts. That's what I meant when I said that it was pragmatic at the outset of my remarks. We need to resolve these concerns; we need to resolve disputes and provide remedies. But to the extent that we can minimize the burden on the courts and to the extent that we can still resolve those disputes in an effective way, I think that's excellent.

When I think about some of the things that are in the bill with regard to firefighters, there are a few that I'd like to highlight. Again, the proposed amendments would enhance the Fire Protection and Prevention Act by adding key legislative provisions that are already available to those covered by the Labour Relations Act—this is just aligning those two pieces of legislation—things like unfair labour practice protections, expedited grievance arbitration and religious exemptions.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board: It would give it the authority to enforce all provisions under part IX of the FPPA. So, again, this is an example of being pragmatic; bringing the Ontario Labour Relations Board into this, again, will presumably allow these disputes to get resolved more quickly than they would be otherwise, potentially. It gives the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written settlement of a grievance etc.

These are all things that align the FPPA, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, with the Labour Relations Act, and afford firefighters the same protections that other folks enjoy, which is only fair and appropriate.

I also wanted to briefly mention that there's another element of the bill which I know some of my colleagues will undoubtedly speak to, which is the safeguards that are put in place to protect workers across the province; first of all, that workers know what their rights are with respect to filing a WSIB claim and that these rights will be protected. That's really, really important. It would prohibit employers from taking any actions against a worker with the intent of discouraging that worker from filing a claim. The worker has the right to file a claim. That has to be protected, and this bill helps to do that.

This bill would also provide greater fairness to survivors in the case of work-related death. It would enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of the worker engaged in the same profession out of which that deceased worker's injury arose. This is important because—and, Speaker, I've had constituents come to me on this—you don't want to calculate the WSIB benefits at the time of the diagnosis because, at that point, their incomes are often lower, or they're even retired. Of course, as a result, the benefits paid out are a lot smaller than they probably should be.

I think that this is a bill that ensures fairness for our firefighters. It protects workers and ensures that the concerns that workers have, whether they be firefighters or workers in other fields across the province, are protected, but it's done in a pragmatic and effective way to serve those people even more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: As the PA to Minister Flynn, I'm pleased to speak in favour of this bill. There has been a lot of work that has gone into this bill. All of us know that our constituency offices get calls about these issues, and there is an issue of fairness that needed to be addressed.

If passed, Bill 109 would amend three acts affecting workers to increase fairness and efficiency. These acts

are the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997; the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997; and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997. As we all know, the workplace has changed significantly since 1997; that's almost 20 years ago.

Changes under this bill would, if they become law, provide increased fairness to all workers across Ontario. This would be done by providing more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector; ensuring that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible through greater efficiency and stability; and helping to provide a fair, just and efficient workers' compensation system.

Strengthening protection for workers while supporting business is part of this government's plan to build Ontario up. Bill 109 is one more example of our commitment to the people of this province.

Our government is committed to protecting Ontario's firefighters, the brave men and women who selflessly put their lives in danger each and every day to ensure that the rest of us are safe. In my riding of Barrie, a few years ago, unfortunately, there was an accident; a roof caved in and we had a firefighter lose his life. His name was Bill Wilkins. The community still grieves the passing of Bill. We want to put things in place so that when those kinds of things happen, there is fairness involved.

The amendments we are proposing, if passed, would bring the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act and provide additional tools to resolve disputes, reducing the need to seek remedies through the courts. As we all know, anything that goes through the courts takes a lot of time and a lot of money. We would like to cut down on the time and the expenses.

Specifically, the amendments would enhance the FPPA by adding very similar, key legislative provisions already covered and provided for in the Labour Relations Act, 1995.

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A few examples of this are things like unfair labour practice protections; expedited grievance arbitration; union security and related provisions; religious objections; Ontario Labour Relations Board authority to enforce all provisions under part 9 of the FPPA; the power of an arbitrator to enforce a written statement of a grievance—this is very important; the ability of the parties to file an arbitration decision in the Superior Court of Justice and have it enforced as an order of that court; and, finally, the power of the Ontario Labour Relations Board to grant interim orders.

Our firefighters sacrifice so much to help keep Ontarians safe, and we are grateful for all the work that they do. In return, it is up to us to ensure that they, too, are protected. Firefighters deserve and should have these rights and protections afforded by the Labour Relations Act.

Bill 109 would provide greater safeguards to all workers in the province. Through making changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, these amendments, if passed, would do four main things. The first is to

ensure that workers know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim and that this right will be protected. If passed, this bill will prohibit employers from taking any actions against a worker with the intent of discouraging the worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim for benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. This would allow the WSIB to prosecute and impose administrative penalties when employers try to impede or suppress claims. This would strengthen the WSIB's efforts by legislating stronger deterrents against employers attempting to impede the reporting of a work-related injury or illness to the WSIB by a worker.

Secondly, we must do all that we can to make sure workers are protected. That's why we are proposing an increase in the maximum corporate penalties for conviction of an offence under the WSIA.

I urge you to support this bill. I think it's a good thing for all the workers in the province.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It's my pleasure to rise today to address Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. In my riding of Davenport, people come into my constituency office every day with questions about workplace safety and what our government has been doing to make Ontario a better place to live and to work. As you know, our government is committed to protecting all those who work in the province, and it is our duty as a government to ensure that all Ontarians work in a safe environment.

Bill 109 aims to accomplish three critical measures: to provide more tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector; to provide fair, just and efficient workers' compensation systems; and to ensure that broader public sector transitions go as smoothly as possible through greater efficiency and stability. If passed, Bill 109 would amend three separate acts affecting workers to increase fairness and efficiency to all workers across Ontario. These acts are the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act.

Under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, Bill 109 would provide improvements to the provisions already covered by the Labour Relations Act. Most importantly, the bill would provide more tools to resolve disputes regarding unfair labour practices, expedited grievance arbitration, union security and related provisions. As well, the proposed bill will give parties the ability to file an arbitration decision and have it enforced by the courts, and give the Ontario Labour Relations Board the ability to grant interim orders.

Mr. Speaker, our firefighters sacrifice so much to keep Ontarians safe and we are grateful for all the work that they do. In return, it is our obligation to ensure that they, too, are protected. Bill 109 is part of this commitment.

Under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, Bill 109 would have positive effects for workers in Ontario in the following ways: First, it will ensure that workers know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim and that

this right will be protected from manipulation, impediments or suppression of a claim by their employer. This is very important for the constituents I represent in Davenport. Many of them are new to this country. They do not have English as a second language, and some of them are fearful of what will happen to them should they put forth a claim. This will protect them and ensure that their claim is not suppressed by an employer.

Secondly, the proposed bill will increase the maximum corporate penalty for conviction of an offence under the WSIA from \$100,000 to \$500,000. This increase is consistent with the maximum fines for corporations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Thirdly, Bill 109 would provide greater fairness for survivors in case of work-related death.

Finally, the amendments proposed to the WSIA through Bill 109 would enshrine the Fair Practices Commission in legislation. The Fair Practices Commission is an important independent and confidential resource that looks into individual complaints, tracks complaint trends, identifies system-wide issues and recommends improvements to the WSIB.

With stronger protection for workers that also supports businesses, this bill will assist with our government's plan to build Ontario up.

The final element of Bill 109 contains legislative amendments to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. This amendment will clarify the relationship between unions in places where there is an amalgamation of hospital, school or municipal workers. If passed, this legislation will remove a redundant vote in situations where one union has no less than 60% of the workers. The exact percentage will be set by further regulation. These amendments would greatly reduce the potential delay and disruption associated with a vote, remove the large associated cost and contribute to more harmonious labour relations in the workplace.

As I stated above, strengthening protection for workers while supporting businesses is part of this government's plan to build Ontario up. Once passed, I will be pleased to bring Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, to Davenport, as it will have positive effects on the talented and hard-working men and women in my riding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member from Barrie and the member from Davenport. I'd also like to compliment those who have previously spoken to this bill.

I am looking forward to speaking to this legislation today, as I've had years of experience working with WSIA and I've also worked with the Office of the Worker Adviser representing injured workers. I know many people who will benefit from this legislation, as well as many instances of abuse of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

I am glad that the Fire Protection and Prevention Act is being reviewed to ensure the safety of all firefighters, and that the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act is being streamlined to help union amalgamation—only when that amalgamation is absolutely necessary, I must add.

However, my primary experience and enthusiasm is for the addition of subsection 22(1) of the WSIA. My primary concern for the operation of the WSIA is the phenomenon of claim suppression, which this bill addresses. The idea that employers are incentivizing or threatening employees for the purpose of discouraging them from filing a claim with the WSIB is rather unfortunate and goes against the safety and well-being of Ontario workers.

An example of this practice is an employer offering an employee paid leave in lieu of the employee filing a WSIB claim. In addition, the employer offered the employee team members end-of-year bonuses if they collectively refrained from filing claims with the WSIB. Accordingly, not only had this employer put the well-being of this man or woman in jeopardy, but also created a workplace culture that was hostile toward anyone who may be injured and wished to pursue a WSIB claim, which is their legal right and they're entitled to do so.

If we put ourselves in these employees' shoes, it is difficult to stand in the way of their colleagues' bonuses. Which employee doesn't want to receive a bonus at the end of the year? This practice completely ignored the ethics of safe employment and ignored the long-term impact of workplace injuries on employees. If the employee in this instance were to suffer chronic pain or illness that may arise from his injury that perhaps presented itself years down the road, what recourse would he have without a WSIB claim as evidence, or any record of the incident of that matter? What protection would be available to him in a case where an employer is at fault, suppressing claims in this duplicitous way of preventing short-term impact on its WSIB record, which in turn put the lives of their employees at risk? And this happens. It's not only putting this employee at risk, working with an injury, but it also puts co-workers at risk because the worker cannot work to his or her full potential because of the injury that was sustained.

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Employees who refrain from filing WSIB claims under these circumstances are unknowingly putting themselves at risk for any potential injuries that may not be attributed to the work environment that led to such injuries. Claim suppression is an unfortunate practice through which employers have the ability to avoid the responsibility of the safety of their employees, a practice which I am wholly against.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I listened to the four members share the 20-minute rotation, and what is abundantly clear is that no Liberal member actually reads the bill, and all they have is a talking point, because what was

interesting, Speaker, four different members got up and spoke and not one of them—of the three subsequent members who spoke, not one of them raised a new point that the first member had not covered in his first five-minute rotation.

I find it incredible that, with all the resources and all the power at the disposal of the Liberal government, the Premier's office could only come up with five minutes' worth of talking points to be distributed between all the Liberal members on the other side of the House. I know they have some quality staff over there. I know they have imaginative, creative staff over there. I find it very, very troubling that they're not using these highly paid resources to come up with more than five minutes' worth of talking points to be distributed between a 58-member caucus, or whatever it is.

So, Speaker, four different members, and not one of the subsequent speakers raised one iota of a new subject on the bill. This is a powerfully, powerfully important—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I don't want to take your time.

I know you don't like what he's saying, and he's certainly roused you up, but try to cut it back a bit so I can hear what he's saying in case he says something that you don't like that I can challenge him on. I can't hear him.

Continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker, for that interjection because it clearly was getting the howls and the hackles up on the other side.

But I would challenge every member on the other side to actually read the Hansard as well as the bill, and they will see that what I am saying is very factual, very truthful, and reading the bill is not a bad thing to do, in my view.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Wayne Gates: You know, it's funny. I'm going to have to give the Conservatives some credit on this because on the five minutes that you did talk and you shared and, yesterday, the one thing that was very clear—it's clear with the Conservatives, it's clear with the Liberals, and it's clear from the NDP: We all support Bill 199 with respect to firefighters.

Ms. Soo Wong: Bill 109.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Bill 109. So are we not making that separate? That's my local. That's why I said that. It used to be my old local.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You'll talk through the Chair.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Yeah, okay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Not "Yeah, okay." You will talk through the Chair and answer properly.

Continue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Now I forgot where I was.

On the firefighters, why are we putting them in that position? Why are we putting firefighters against other locals, other unions, other workers right across the province of Ontario? We all respect firefighters. We all want that to happen. Why do we not pull that out of the bill?

When it comes to my colleague who talked about the WSIB, it's been going on forever, where employers are telling employees, "Don't report. We'll give you a shirt at the end of the month. We'll give you a free dinner, but don't report your injury." That part is very good, and it's good that we're finally addressing it, because the WSIB has been broken for years. We have so many of our constituents come into our office and talk about the problems with WSIB and employers taking advantage of it.

The last thing I want to talk to really quick is CarePartners. If you care about labour, if you care about workers, I'm asking you: Go to the Minister of Health and please ask him to get involved with the CarePartners situation, where they've been put on strike for six months. Nurses just want to do their job. Go to this private company and say, "Get to the table and get a contract."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 109. I know my colleagues from Davenport, Barrie and Durham have spoken so passionately about the bill, but one piece of the bill that I want to highlight is section 176.1 dealing the creation of the fair practices commissioner. Hopefully the member opposite is listening intently.

The issue here is the fact that the fair practices commissioner—I heard that the member from Niagara has expressed concern about the role of the WSIB. The creation of this commissioner will ensure fair practices in terms of the treatment of workers when it comes to WSIB claims. But more importantly, it will provide an opportunity for this ombudsman to do a yearly report to the WSIB of activities and concerns raised throughout the year—tracking of complaints, identifying systemic issues—and how to improve the WSIB.

Mr. Speaker, this is the right thing to do. I know the government already passed legislation about creating a patient ombudsman. Now we're going to be providing, through this legislation, a fair practices commissioner, to ensure every complainant who deals with the WSIB will be treated fairly and with respect. I know the member from Niagara Falls, who spoke so eloquently a minute ago, was talking about different complaints about the WSIB. I get them all the time in Scarborough—Asgincourt. Finally, we're going to have a commissioner that will address these issues—and, more importantly, to be dealt with, especially if they're concerns identified by a complainant.

I understand that other provinces have similar commissioners: British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. The provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba actually have this requirement in law.

At the end of the day, this is what the law is about: protecting all Ontarians and championing their concerns.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'm pleased to rise and chat a little bit about this particular Bill 109. First of all, I just want to indicate to the Legislature that we, the PCs, are definitely in favour of this bill at second reading, but we also feel, though, that there needs to be more public hearings a little bit later on, because I'm sure there will be some changes that we would like to see incorporated into this bill at later points in time.

We also support fair labour laws here in the province of Ontario. We believe, and I'm sure that others in this House also believe, that there needs to be a balance that represents the rights of workers but also the needs of employers as well. We need to grow the economy and we need to create good-paying jobs, too, by the way. What we need to do is strengthen Ontario's competitiveness. If we do that, then we have more businesses coming in and we have more people employed, and that's really what it's all about.

We're also very much in favour of protecting workers and workers' right as well. Again, we do value the work done by our firefighters. To me, our firefighters, our emergency response people, are the heroes of this society as well. They risk their lives, where many of us in our own roles—not quite so much.

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But I wanted to point out something. I heard one of the members from the government side talk about the bad practices of some of the businesses, and I want to bring to your attention a gentleman by the name of Les Liversidge; forgive me if I attacked his name. He's a respected expert on WSIB. Apparently, he's opposed to WSIB because he feels that it's trying to address a problem that really doesn't exist, and that is—very quickly—his independent research shows that malicious employers are non-existent in Ontario.

I respect what the other member had to say.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Barrie has two minutes.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I think we can all agree, whether we repeated things over and over or not, that this legislation is very important. We need to be fair to all the workers in the province. We all agree that WSIB is in need of repair. Things need to happen more quickly and more fairly; there needs to be a way of doing that. This legislation puts in place things not only for the firefighters but for other workers. It reduces delay and causes less stress for the person who goes through it.

In my former job as union thug, as people would say, I dealt with a lot of people who had a great deal of problems with WSIB. Unfortunately, it throws their whole lives into chaos. Very clearly, we don't want that to happen. We want the process to be done as quickly as possible and as fairly as possible. These are people who have lives that do not need further disruption when they've been injured, or the families of the people who

have passed away from workplace accidents or illness. Very clearly there are a lot of jobs that we did not know in the past cause chronic illnesses and conditions that result in disability or death. We want to make sure that their disputes are resolved as quickly as possible. I urge you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 109 this afternoon. It was also very interesting, as I heard the parliamentary assistant wrap up her debate, her comments, that she referred to herself as a union thug in her past life. It's not too often we've heard members in this House refer to themselves as union thugs, but that one will be memorable and one that I'm sure many of us will use on a multitude of occasions down the road.

I mentioned in my comments during the earlier speaker that there were four Liberal speakers who all said the same thing. After the first speaker, they shared their time and they all said the same thing. Why I brought that to the House's attention—of course, we know in this House that the standing orders prohibit and prevent anyone speaking to a bill more than once. The purpose of that standing order is to prevent repetitive, redundant and frivolous comments in the House. I think what the Liberals just did was in breach of the standing orders because they all said the exact, repetitive, redundant—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I would hope and recognize that the member needs to come back and speak about Bill 109.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, it's true. In reference to the point of order, if you feel they violated something, you might want to do a point of order as opposed to making a comment about what they should or shouldn't do with a point of order, because that would be my decision.

Continue.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. I had no intention of raising the matter as a point of order. I was bringing to it the members' attention that an interpretation could be looked at in understanding the rationale behind that standing order.

Speaker, I also mentioned that it was clear that no member on the Liberal side, including the parliamentary assistant, had actually read the legislation, and that, with all their resources, all their expensive communications people, the best they could do is come up with five minutes' worth of talking points. So—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Another point of order from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Obviously, the member has a challenge hearing you give him direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, if I felt that he was challenging me, he certainly would have heard from me very quickly, thank you. But I do believe

he is trying to get around the issue with other discussion. The bottom line is, I haven't found anything out of order, so go ahead.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you, Speaker. You're always a fair and impartial judge of the activities within the House.

There are three sections to this bill. I'm going to start on section 3, the WSIB schedule of this bill, because there's little disagreement, little argument, about schedule 1. Schedule 1 brings the firefighters' labour legislation pretty much in line with all other labour legislation in the province. So I'll start with schedule 3, with the WSIB.

It surely is known by all members in this House that the WSIB is a problematic, troublesome and some would often say—with justification—a dysfunctional agency of this government. We have all heard and seen, observed and advocated for constituents who have found their dealings with the WSIB very, very troublesome. And not just employees, but also employers. It doesn't serve either very well very frequently.

What I want to bring to the attention of the House is section 3, 22.1(3). This is a new concept that's included in this schedule. It's the creation of an administrative penalty. It reads, "An employer who contravenes subsection (1) shall pay the prescribed amount to the board. This payment is in addition to any penalty imposed by a court for an offence under section 155.1."

If you go to section 155.1, "An employer who contravenes section 22.1 is guilty of an offence," and that's where we get the increase from a \$100,000 fine to a \$500,000 fine under section 155.1, a fivefold increase. It's a pretty substantial increase.

Then, on top of that, we have this administrative penalty. What the administrative penalty doesn't state is how much. It's vacant. It's absent. But we also know that the difference between an offence and an administrative monetary penalty is that there is no defence against an administrative monetary penalty, whereas under the provincial offences you can defend yourself. You can defend yourself on that offence that has up to a \$500,000 fine attached to it, but you cannot defend yourself under section 3, against an unknown monetary penalty. I think it's incumbent upon the government to give some clarification, both to this House and, indeed, when the bill passes, what sort of penalty would be applied under 22.1(3). Is it a \$100 penalty? Is it a \$5,000 penalty? Is it a \$5-million penalty? Just what is 22.1(3) going to do?

I also want to raise to the attention of the members here that under 48.1(2) in schedule 3—I've had some personal experience with this, on WSIB determining earnings. I'll read from the bill on 48.1(2): "taking into account the average earnings at the time of the worker's injury," to determine benefits. What it doesn't say is, what is the duration that this panel is going to look at? Is it going to look at the average earnings for a week prior to the injury? Is it going to be looking at it for a month prior? A month after? A year? What is the duration that the arbitrator and the adjudicator are going to look at to determine the average earnings?

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I had a case of that this summer, where a gentleman who was a contractor had an injury. He filed his claim under the provisions of Bill 119, and initially his average earnings were determined to be \$150 a week, because he didn't work for the two weeks prior to his injury. He had just come back to work. WSIB looks at this and says, "Well, you didn't make any money in that two weeks, or very little, so we're going to define your earnings at \$150 and that's your reimbursable benefits."

Speaker, the way this bill is written is faulty. We need to attach a time frame on it, so that the adjudicators looking at these claims down the road will have some guidance from this House. I think looking at those average earnings is a good way, but I don't think they should be looking at the average earnings when there's an absence of definitive information for that person specifically—looking at those things that are maybe holidays, maybe other elements that we're not quite aware of or don't know what is going to happen.

Those are a couple of things under schedule 3 that I would like to hear—it's unfortunate, I guess, that the parliamentary assistant has already used up her talking points and she won't be able to respond to my questions on schedule 3. But maybe somebody else who hasn't got their talking points at the present time yet could formulate a response.

So that's WSIB. We also then look at schedule 2. Schedule 2 is a pretty brief section of the bill; it's one page. I know it's a page that has garnered the interest of the third party substantially, and they are opposed to this. I can understand them being opposed to it. I'm opposed to that provision as well. I find it difficult to believe their rationale and their justification, but I will say this: Under schedule 2, if two or more unions and the membership of those two or more bargaining units are looking for an amalgamation, it becomes deemed that the largest one, if it has 60% or more of the workplace, will be deemed to be the bargaining unit, and employees and union members will not have a choice in the matter. I think that is wrong.

I always believe that we get better decisions in life and a better society when people have the ability to exercise a choice, exercise their judgment and determine what they want to do—not unlike an election. Sometimes we don't even like the results of elections, but the process is good, it's solid and it's legitimate. We can respect it, right? People made a choice. The government, under schedule 2, is taking away the choice. That's significant.

Where I have difficulty with the third party on this—and I listened to the member from Welland intently in her hour-long leadoff. In her speech, she was talking about the need for greater card-based certification. Of course, card-based certification doesn't allow for a vote. It doesn't allow for a secret ballot. It's just done. If you can prove cards were signed, then you can have a bargaining unit imposed. So, they're desirous of voting for amalgamations but not desirous of voting for the formulation or the creation of a bargaining unit.

Voting is important. We need to remain steadfast in our advocacy of that essential principle, in a fair and just democracy, that people have a choice, that they can exercise it freely, that they can exercise it when it comes with respect to a ballot, and that they can exercise it in secret, free from any reprisal or any retribution or intimidation or coercion.

In the five-minute talking points that we heard from the four different Liberal members, I did not hear them once address the need or the rationale of why they should take away the rights of choice for union members when there's an amalgamation of multiple bargaining units. Maybe somebody up in the corner office who has that creative writing style and imagination could develop some talking points in that regard, and the next four members who share a 20-minute rotation could explain that to us, as well.

Then we come to schedule 1. Schedule 1 is a very simple and appropriate schedule. It really does—and I'll have to agree with the Liberal members—align the firefighters with the other labour provisions of the labour legislation. There's not much to be critical of, I don't believe, in large part. Firefighters ought to have the same protection of the law as other employees; I don't think anything unduly more and certainly not less. They should have the same equal provisions and protection of the law.

However—there's always a "however" with a Liberal schedule—in schedule 1 of the bill, page 10, subsection 5: "With respect to the board"—this is the board which is going to adjudicate and determine disputes—"the power to make interim orders under this section applies instead of the power under subsection 16.1(1) of the Statutory Powers Procedure Act."

Just for some context: The Statutory Powers Procedure Act is the general framework that all our administrative tribunals and all our adjudicative panels work under. That's the statute that gives the authority to and places the responsibility on the tribunals to act somewhat like a court, so that there can be due process of law and a recognition that, when we abide by due process of law, we get better remedies. We get a better probability of justice in the outcome. But for some reason, this board is not going to have to play by the same rules as all other

boards. It doesn't have to abide by the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

So those are some of my criticisms of the bill. Schedule 1: pretty good—one little question in there on the boards that somebody may or may not respond to.

I do have to make one more comment. When I heard the earlier debate, the member for Northumberland–Quinte West as well as a number of others mentioned about getting this bill to committee: "We'll examine it and we'll make amendments." Well, what a fairy tale that is. The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has been here—even though he had a little bit of an intermission in his tenure—for a while, so he is experienced and he's knowledgeable about how things work here. In my eight years here—and I've attended many, many committee hearings—I have seen two amendments get passed. The idea that amendments are going to be adopted by the Liberal majority government? What? Any moment now, a unicorn's going to start trotting in here. I absolutely believe that there will be unicorns and pixie dust the day that amendments are going to be accepted by the Liberal majority government and voted on in a rational, intelligent, informed fashion. It doesn't happen.

But we see what's going to happen with this bill. It's the same play that we've seen on just about all bills this session. The really non-substantive bills—well, they're all non-substantive, generally, from the Liberal Party. However, they will divide on every 20-minute rotation and they will all say the same thing. They will then seek closure on the bill as soon as six hours is up and say, "All our speakers, all our members had their voice. It's time to close off debate. There's no further need for any discussion." We've seen this play time and time again. And then they'll get to the committee and they will restrict and prevent the public from making deputations, as we've seen—five minutes.

Speaker, I could go on, but I'm not going to. I'll wait for the committee. I'll bring some amendments forward and wait for the unicorns.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The clock being six to 6, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1753.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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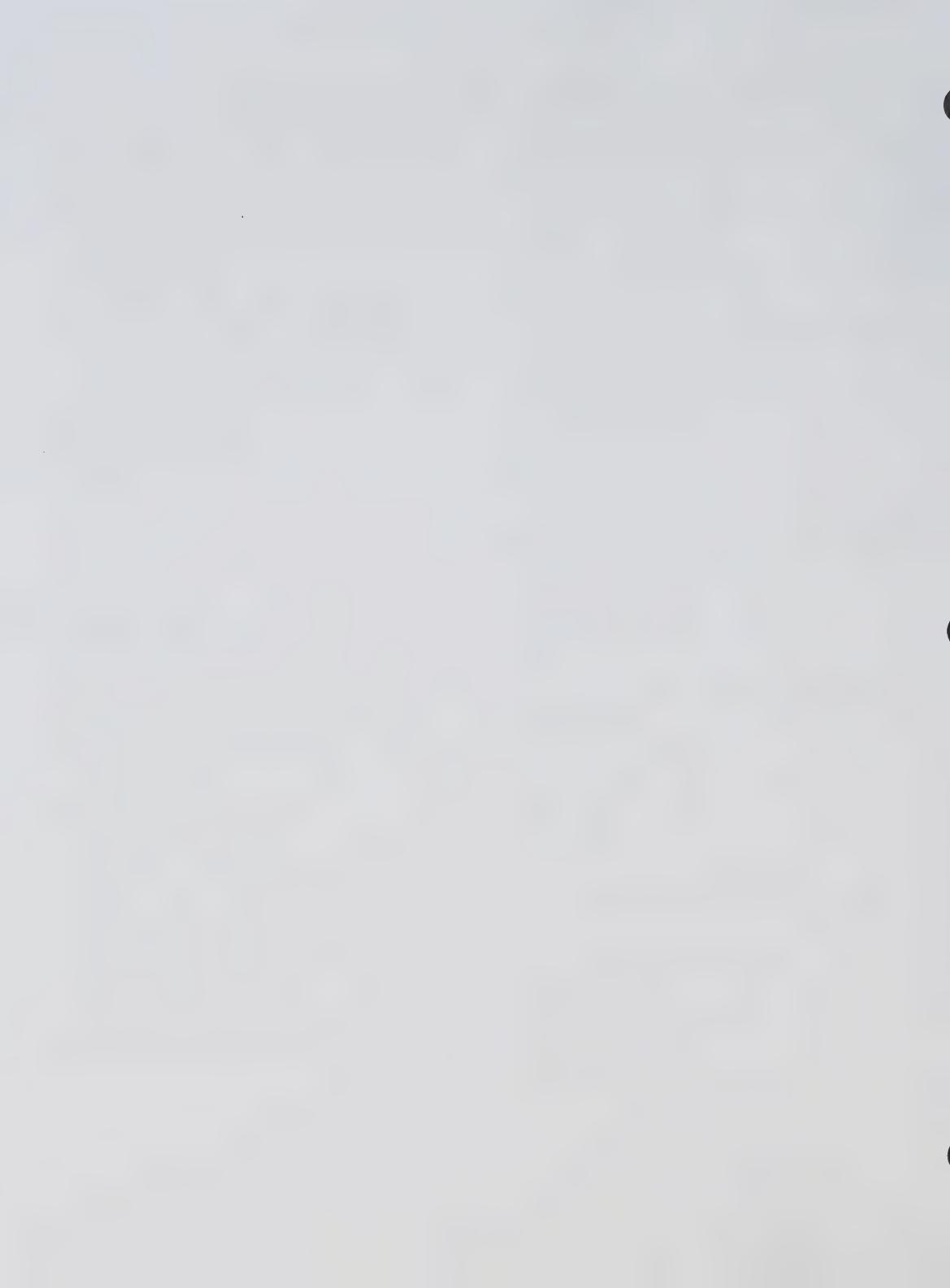
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Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
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Glenn Thibeault
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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch







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First Session, 41st Parliament

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Thursday 29 October 2015

Jeudi 29 octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l'emploi et les relations de travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to speak to Bill 109 here today. As with every bill this Liberal government puts forward these days, there are quite a few changes across a number of laws that are being pushed through under one piece of legislation. We started to see that some of these bills contain some provisions and changes that are good for hard-working men and women in Ontario, alongside policies that simply make no sense. Bill 109 is no different.

I'm going to touch on several different aspects of the bill during my time. Hopefully, I can cover what makes sense in this bill and what needs to be removed or split into separate bills.

I'd like to first touch on how this bill affects our first responders—our local professional and volunteer firefighters. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, one of the major roles of the bill is to amend the 1997 Fire Protection and Prevention Act. I have stood up in this House many times before and talked about the importance of our first responders and, frankly, I'm happy to do it again. I don't think anyone here would disagree with me when I talk about how important our first responders are to all our communities. I certainly hope that the work they do for us isn't lost on anyone in this chamber or anyone watching at home. It's incredible, it's heroic and it deserves to be recognized.

When the unthinkable happens in our communities, it is those first responders who keep us safe. They are the ones who put their lives on the line to make sure that our loved ones are all right. Taking a look at these numbers, Mr. Speaker, all 11,000 professional firefighters and 19,000 volunteer firefighters in this province are normal, everyday people like you and me, who take on this great responsibility. Across the province, I am proud to say that they do an incredible job, and I'm even prouder to call many of them my friends.

Briefly, I would like to focus on just one group of these first responders. If I had enough time to talk about all of them, I would; honestly, they all deserve our recognition. In my riding of Niagara Falls, the firefighters, whether they are full-time or volunteer, are an integral part of our community.

These brave men and women already give our communities such an incredible gift that I don't believe they owe us anything—and yet they continue to give and be the cornerstones of our neighbourhoods. Take the professional firefighters in Niagara Falls, for example: Just last week in Niagara Falls, the local firefighters held their annual haunted house, which brought in donations to our local food bank, Project Share. They were there using their spare time to get donations for those who need it the most. Despite the fact that many of them had spent the previous week working hard throughout the night to ensure that we could sleep well, they still came out for a great cause.

This is no different than the fundraising efforts of the volunteer forces in smaller communities: in Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Stevensville, Crystal Beach and Ridgeway. I would be here all day if I tried to list all the dinners and fundraisers these people put on to help our community. Not one of these groups of dedicated men and women have ever felt that they were only first responders. They all give back to our communities, and they all do an incredible job.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get at here is that these men and women give so much to us that it's our obligation to ensure that they are taken care of. We've had some movement on recognizing that the unique cancers they face in their workplace need to be covered. But there is still work to do, especially around the issue of making sure post-traumatic stress disorder treatments are taken care of. When it comes to issues of mental health protection for our first responders, this province needs to move forward more quickly and ensure that we are not leaving any first responder behind.

I'm happy to see some pieces of legislation coming in to protect our first responders, but more needs to be done. I've seen first-hand in my riding where firefighters have died because of workplace cancers or hazards. Simply put, this is something that our province needs to make sure they have support for.

In my riding, there was a firefighter named Tim Hoday who served the force for 32 years. In April of this year, Tim passed away at the age of 55 after battling leukemia that he contracted during his work years. It was a sad day for the force and, really, for all of Niagara Falls. Clearly, this is an issue that is ongoing and one that needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

In Bill 109, I see that we're bringing a number of protections that exist under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act into the Labour Relations Act. It is my understanding that this would make the grievance arbitration process move more quickly. So long as firefighters aren't losing any protection—and I don't believe, with the way this is written, that they will—then this is something I can say is worthy of support. When I read about procedures to ensure we can have a quick grievance arbitration, I see that other unionized workers have this in their collective agreements—and have had it for decades. So it's time that we expand these procedures to our firefighters. I understand that they've been extremely frustrated in the past by the lengthy nature of the arbitration process, so I'm glad to see it's being fixed. If other workers have these rights and the Ontario Labour Relations Board can handle these issues quicker than the Ontario courts, then in my mind it makes sense to bring the two together.

0910

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that every single man and woman who wakes up in the morning and goes to work is fully protected, under the laws of this province, and goes to work in a safe workplace. That means we have to ensure that laws exist that keep them safe and that those laws are Unifor—uniform—across the province.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Sorry about that. Hey, it happens.

In a lot of workplaces where there are gaps in these laws, it's unions who step in to protect workers. They work language into collective agreements that provides safety training, safety regulations and protections in case of injuries. We need to do everything we can to ensure that every worker in this province has the protection they require to do their job safely and to be secure if the worse should happen.

When a bill of this nature comes forward, I always like to ask my first responders how they feel about it. It's very important to me to ensure that I bring these bills back to my community, discuss them and bring them back here. That's the way we should get community input. It is my hope that when we bring these recommendations back to the House, they get implemented when bills go to committee. The Liberals may have a majority government, but they still have a responsibility to represent everyone in the province of Ontario.

When I brought this bill to the local firefighters, they said they were happy with the language that was in it. So I can say I am also happy to know that they will receive the protection afforded to them and other workers under the Labour Relations Act.

I'm also happy to know that grievances can be dealt with in a more efficient manner. We all know that the wheels of justice turn slowly, and there is no need to get these complex cases caught up in the Ontario courts. If there is a way for other workers to solve their problems quickly and cleanly, then our firefighters' associations should have that same process.

I'd like to touch briefly on section 3 of this bill as well, which amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. The bill adds some provisions which will ensure that employers do not try to stop a worker from reporting a workplace injury. I think I stand with both workers and even employers in this province when I say that this is important. I look at the businesses in my riding, and I know that those employers want their workers to be as safe as they can be.

No one wants to see anyone hurt on the job, or even killed. People in my riding are just honest, hard-working people. Employers do want to help their employees get ahead and live good lives, and they want them to do it safely. So when we write this kind of legislation, I believe it targets very few employers; the kind of people who do not have the health of their employees in mind. It's unfortunate, but sometimes that happens in the workplace. I don't believe any single man or woman should have to wake up in the morning and worry about whether or not they will come home at night.

I've worked in manufacturing plants where there was quite a bit of danger. I've seen workers take up the cause of health and safety themselves. It's important to them, and it needs to be important to us. As legislators, it is important for us to support them, and it's the right thing to do.

Frankly, there are reasons that accident reporting needs to happen. If a worker is injured on the job, they may need compensation to recover, or they may need to report an area of the workplace that needs to have safety checks immediately before someone else gets hurt. Any employer who tries to discourage reporting workplace injuries not only shows disregard for their own employees but also for their own business.

I see that Bill 109 also increases penalties against employers who try to break their obligation to keep employees safe and to ensure that they have adequate compensation if they are injured. I'm happy to see that these penalties are being increased. Last year, there were more than 230,000 claims filed with the WSIB. We need to do everything we can to ensure that those people are getting the support they need.

The sad reality of this province is that there are a lot of people living from paycheque to paycheque—far too many people, in fact. In a province as rich as Ontario, this should never happen, but unfortunately it does.

Too many families are struggling to make ends meet. It breaks my heart, but I even see it in my riding: good,

hard-working people who just want a chance to put in an honest day's work and yet can't find a place to do it. So when they do get a job, they're worried about reporting a workplace safety violation because they're worried about losing their jobs.

When workers don't have proper protection in the workplace, these kinds of things happen. It's not hard to imagine. Picture a young person, maybe 20 years old, working their first full-time job. It's easy to see how someone like that might be convinced not to report an accident. As a province, we need to do everything we can in our power to ensure those situations never happen. No one should wake up in the morning and worry about whether or not they're ever going to see their family again.

I believe this section of Bill 109 moves towards addressing that, but the NDP has offered many other positive ideas for workplace safety that need to be implemented. These are the steps the government must take to protect the working people who drive our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to turn my attention to where I see the problems in this bill, particularly section 2. Section 2 talks about collective bargaining rights when two unionized workplaces merge. Right now, when two unionized workplaces merge, the membership of the new unit holds a vote, and whichever representative wins that vote earns the right to bargain on behalf of the employees. For some reason, which I hope the Liberals can explain, the Liberal government has decided to remove that right. They have decided to add another exception into when these votes happen, which will alter the way these mergers work.

I have seen this happen in workplaces. Workplaces are changing all the time. Sometimes they are growing, but unfortunately today they are shrinking. When this happens, the representatives of the workers have to adapt, too. There are a lot of benefits that come from combining representation in two workplaces. It allows for the union to be diverse and well-represented. I'd like the Liberals to listen to this: For example, Mr. Speaker—I have to go through the Speaker—when I was president of my local union, Unifor Local 199, which I think I mentioned earlier, we represented workers who had been working in auto plants for decades but also workers in credit unions, security officers, even textbook shipping.

At the time, the name of the union was the Canadian Auto Workers. Some people found it odd that the Auto Workers union had such a large and diverse membership. But if you get past the confusion of the name, you can see why the local's diversity was a good thing. It meant that our union was well-rounded, that we represented people from all walks of life, not just one sector. It meant that people from all over the community came together for one purpose: securing rights in their workplace. It meant that when we went to bargain on behalf of the workers, we knew the impacts that our collective agreements would have on the entire community, not just a certain sector. Everyone who was part of the union offered a great insight that helped to make our decisions.

What I'm getting at here is that mergers happen frequently, and typically they are for good reason. So for decades, when these mergers happened, it was simple: Let the workers decide who they want to represent them. That seems pretty simple to me, and in fact it's something that we should all embrace; it's actually called democracy. Let the men and women working on the floor decide who they want to speak for them instead of government. When you put it that way, I really don't see how anyone can justify taking that away from them, yet that's exactly what Bill 109 does.

In a lot of cases, the larger union wins the vote because it has more resources to draw on to represent the workers. But at least—and this is what's important to listen to, everybody in this room—the workers had a choice. It's actually our constitutional right. You can find it in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in section 2(d), where it says everyone has the fundamental right of freedom of association. That association means the right to freely choose who you associate yourself with and who represents you. It's a right that those in the labour movement hold very highly, especially when they feel like their rights in the workplace are under attack.

0920

This section of Bill 109 will fundamentally alter how that right of collective bargaining is carried out. Like I mentioned, these mergers aren't that rare, and this is something we see impacts all of Ontario. I understand that some associations may want this to speed up the process for certifying a workplace, but it is clear there needs to be more discussion on this section.

There needs to be more discussion about whether or not this removes a person's right to associate, and there needs to be a discussion about how this will impact working people and their representatives. When these discussions happen, we need to have the representatives of working people present—the ones on the ground who actually deal with this.

I've only got a minute left and I'm going to talk about CarePartners, but I'll do that in my two-minute wrap-up. When you talk about labour and you want to make changes to labour to make it better for workers in the province of Ontario, there is no better example of how government should get involved than when people are on strike for six months, when a private company called CarePartners is taking on a union to break the union in a workplace in St. Catharines, when nurses are on strike for six months, when they're getting paid \$15 an hour. Guess who is replacing those workers so a private company can make money at the expense of nurses in the province of Ontario? If you're going to be serious about labour, we have to talk about what's going on in communities right across Ontario. No scabs should be replacing nurses in the province of Ontario and certainly not in my good friend's riding of St. Catharines.

I see my time is just about up. I'll touch on that a little further in my comments. Thank you very much for giving me a chance to speak this morning.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I appreciated the very thoughtful and experienced comments from my colleague from Niagara Falls. I think he offers a very good analysis of this bill and some very good suggestions that I hope the government will certainly look into through the committee process, that these will definitely be examined.

As he said, the big change in this legislation is that for the first time we are placing the firefighters, who are covered by this piece of legislation, which governs firefighters, the fire protection act—before, that wasn’t under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. Now it’s been folded in under the Ontario Labour Relations Act. That means that firefighters will now also have all the protections under the Ontario Labour Relations Act, which is something that they’ve asked for.

One of the main benefits of this is, hopefully, that the cumbersome and very awkward arbitration process is going to be expedited, because it can drag on for months and years. This is one of the advantages of doing this.

Also, in terms of this legislation, there is another important part of the legislation. There is the fair practices commission that’s going to be instituted, which gets rid of all the unnecessary delays in resolving workplace disputes between the employer and employee.

This act is a step forward. Again, it’s an ongoing attempt to improve the plight of workers and their protections. Hopefully, together we can make this a very good, helpful piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that we’re all very concerned about workplace safety, not just for our first responders, but for our doctors and nurses as well. We’re hearing a lot more reports about assaults in hospitals and nursing homes and things like that. Everybody deserves to work in a safe work environment: safety in terms of physical trauma, but also safety in terms of emotional stresses.

I think that we have to come up with a better plan. It’s not enough just to recognize the dangers. This is a good start, Bill 109, to address a lot of the problems, but we also need to address the fact that some jobs are so physically and emotionally demanding that, really, we have to have people who can kind of take a break the way university professors take a break—every seven years, they have a year of sabbatical where they do research or concentrate on something else.

I’m sure it wasn’t meant to be a break from the classroom; it was meant to be a time to focus on the research. But a lot of the professors that I know say, “You know what? I look forward to that break every seven years. It keeps me, in some ways, mentally strong. It makes me a better professor because, in some ways, I miss it when I have that year off.” I think that that’s maybe something that we have to do.

We have to recognize that we need to keep our first responders emotionally strong and that, perhaps, they have to have a certain time of the year—I’m not saying every seven years; maybe one month of the year—where

they’re doing something else: they’re going into classrooms, speaking to students, and it’s not one person’s job that they have for their whole life and somebody else’s job to actually go into burning buildings or get people out of difficult car accidents, which we’ve heard of a lot lately, especially near my riding of Thornhill, just north. We’ve had some horrific car accidents.

So I think we can all appreciate what our first responders have to go through and that there’s a lot more we can do to support them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt.

Mme France Gélinas: It was a pleasure to listen to my colleague from Niagara Falls go through the different parts of the bills and really show the parts that add value and the parts that are really problematic with this bill, and try to understand why they’re all put together.

While he was talking, I couldn’t help but remember a good friend of mine, Dennis Pietrobon, who was with the Sudbury fire department. He started just before my husband started at the fire department. They grew up through the ranks together. He was a firefighter for many years. He became a captain at one of the stations in Sudbury, and he went on to become platoon chief.

Unfortunately, Dennis is also one of those statistics from the fire department where he did contract a deadly cancer. He retired from the Sudbury fire department as a platoon chief and died really shortly thereafter from a disease he had contracted at work. It was at a time when we were trying to get some of those cancers recognized, and it was a tough go. It was a really difficult thing for his wife, Claire, who is still around with us.

Dennis was from Sudbury. His entire family, his children, all live in and around Sudbury. It was a tough time for the entire service. Unfortunately, Dennis is not the only one who contracted a deadly disease at work. There are a number of other firefighters in Sudbury who work with my husband who are also facing cancers, but things are a little bit easier because the laws got easier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Good morning. I’d also like to commend the member from Niagara Falls on his introductory remarks. He’s obviously a very knowledgeable individual when it comes to labour relations.

Bill 109, if it’s passed, is going to amend three acts, as has already been indicated: the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, as well as the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. These acts came into effect in 1997.

So here we are 18 years later, and, obviously, times have changed. It’s great that this government is moving to update some of the legislation to come in line with current situations that are happening in labour across the province of Ontario.

I want to just speak specifically about our firefighters because I have a lot of good firefighter friends back in my hometown and many throughout my riding. These are 2013 numbers: There are 11,122 full-time firefighters;

there are 19,219 volunteer firefighters; and there are 214 part-time firefighters.

0930

We recognize the good work that our first responders do, and our firefighters, the role that they play, not only in fire prevention. They've got some of the most difficult jobs, being, obviously, the majority of the time, first on the scene at any incident, especially related to car accidents.

The amendments that we're proposing to those particular acts would come in greater alignment with the Labour Relations Act of Ontario. So I think it's important that we give labour the tools to more easily resolve disputes. We know that court costs are quite high—when things get to the courts—but this will make it a little bit easier; it's a streamlined process. I look forward to further discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Niagara Falls. You have two minutes for your reply.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank all my colleagues for their comments.

Because the Liberals are really hitting on the firefighters, let's be clear: We agree with the firefighters. I've talked to the firefighters, and they said they just want their issues taken care of. They don't want to get caught in the weeds on this bill, and there are some weeds in this bill that we have to make sure don't put them in that thing.

So let's be clear: The full-time firefighters, the volunteer firefighters, our first responders, agree with what you are doing in this bill. We agree with what you're doing. The Conservatives agree with what you're doing. We agree that WSIB has to be taken care of. I know because of my workplace, what I've done over a number of years, that a lot of workers would go to a worker when he got hurt on the job and say, "Hey, you know, we're going to lose the \$50 bonus we get every month if you report the injury. Why don't you just get a paper, go sit in the office and don't report the injury." We know that goes on. And it goes on with big employers. Surprisingly, yesterday, my colleague from Welland said that it happened in the NHS, and it went on for years and years. So we understand that the WSIB has to be taken care of.

What we don't understand is why you're attacking the fundamental right of workers to decide who they want to represent them as a union. Why are you pitting the firefighters against unions across the province of Ontario? I say to the unions out there that want this bill that I've always felt the worker should have the choice. If they don't want Unifor to represent them, or if they don't want Wayne Gates to be their president, they have a mechanism in place to choose. They have the right to choose. What I've always said to unions is that if you service your employees and the membership that you represent, you never have to worry about that happening. They will never leave you because they're being serviced. So why are we doing this at the expense of the firefighters? Why are we doing this at the expense of WSIB?

So I'm asking the Liberal government to, please, pull that part of the bill out. Let workers choose who they want to represent them. They have a fundamental right to do that; it's their democratic right to do it. Please, pull it out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to talk a little bit about the bill, and I just want to talk about something that we don't get to talk about here, which I think is the importance of organized labour and labour unions to the civility of our society, because we often forget the fundamentals about why we're doing that.

Just to say, I'm sharing my time today with three of my colleagues: the member for Beaches-East York, the member for Sudbury and the member for Kingston and the Islands.

In my mayor days, I think anyone—and I know there are other mayors, former mayors or recovering mayors in the House. I think one of the hardest duties we had—I know the member for Welland is smiling at me because I think she knows what I'm about to say. All of us go to funerals for firefighters, and we see the children. Mr. Speaker, it has always been, for me, particularly sad when you see the family of firefighters who have spent their whole life protecting other families so that moms and dads and children can grow old together. I think one of the hardest things I ever did when I was a mayor was having to spend time—it was a bittersweet thing—with moms, often, and sometimes dads, and children whose fathers were taken at far too young an age by a whole raft of horrible diseases. I always made a point of going to those funerals, but more importantly, following up with the families after. I don't think anyone who has ever been in local politics, who has seen the sheer numbers of Canadians who have been firefighters who have died with these diseases—removing a lot of the obstacles that we're removing today is just basic respect for them and their families.

So I'm very proud of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and obviously a little emotional. But it's also just a moment to remind us of the importance of labour. I remember my grandfather worked at the Angus yards in Montreal. He had a stroke. He had nine children; two of them died in childbirth because of our health care system. We didn't have medicare back then. I remember my grandmother, this incredible Ukrainian woman, who spoke hardly a word of English, raising seven kids with a husband at home who had had a stroke and who could not work. She got involved with the union to get that works yard unionized. It was only after the Angus yards were unionized that they got pensions. Her daughter, my great aunt, my Aunt Ann, was married to a mine worker, a miner in Sudbury. She was one of those union maids, brave women who took Inco all the way to the Supreme Court to win widows' pensions and protect the hard-working women whose husbands all died of respiratory illnesses. My uncles in Sudbury, all three of them, died in their fifties, at very young ages, because of the air quality

issues that they had that today we would think of as outrageous, but at that time—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: She is still alive. She's 98 years old now, hanging in there, and still a force to be reckoned with.

I remember, it was that tradition of those two great women, that mine labour activism—in the early AIDS epidemic, we were running a clinic that we had to fund ourselves. The federal health minister, who was Conservative, said AIDS was a moral issue, not a health issue. I spent more time raising money to provide basic clinical support—we went to our provincial NDP government to get a billing number for our nurses and doctors, and they wouldn't give us one. So we had no federal money, we couldn't get a billing number, and our docs and our nurses worked for free with young men dying of AIDS at a time when we didn't know how that virus was transmitted. It was almost all volunteer-given health care. People would throw up and bleed on you, and many mainstream health care institutions were afraid to treat people in those early days of the epidemic.

Then I joined CUPE, and I organized my workshop through CUPE. It was only after the labour movement and the Winnipeg Labour Council got on our side that we finally got financial support. All of that came from unions, including the firefighters, who understood public service.

There's a lot of detail in this bill that my colleagues, I'm sure, will speak about. I'm very proud to be part of a government—and I know we're not the only people in this House; I agree with what the member from Niagara Falls said. But we should not get so picky about this. My own view is that firefighters deserve our respect and our support, and they're getting that today, but so do all kinds of other workers in precarious and vulnerable situations out there who don't have the rights of firefighters. So I hope that all of us who stand in this House who have been active in labour and come from labour families, who know that the laws we have weren't created so much by Legislatures but were often hard fought in courts and by union activism, will see this as a beginning for a much more activist agenda around labour, which I'm very committed to.

I think that beyond partisan politics, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot more work to do, because there are a lot of people out there who would love to have some of these rights and who don't yet have them. There's a bigger conversation to be had. Labour has been in decline in membership, and that concerns me as someone who knows that my rights—and my family is in this country and healthy because of labour unions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a pleasure for me to speak to Bill 109 as well, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. It's always a pleasure to follow the member for Toronto Centre, who brings that emotional piece to our debate so often, reminding us how import-

ant it is, the work we are doing; how important it is, putting a face to what is in black and white in statute changes, a face to the fundamental impacts that we will be having on people's lives.

The member from Niagara Falls spoke at length about the firefighter piece. We are delighted to hear that we're getting the firefighter piece very much right, according to him and his analysis. Particularly, what we're doing with this piece of legislation is that we're streamlining the procedures for what firefighters currently do in their own labour relations environment with the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

This is a very particular personal moment for me because my stepson, Devon Kerr, my partner Lisa Martin's son, has recently qualified to be a firefighter and has taken his first position up in Bala, Ontario, as a part-time firefighter and is looking forward to a very long career in this field. I know the kinds of protections that we're bringing in will be of benefit to him. He is, of course, following in his father's footsteps, who was a captain in Toronto Fire Services, and we wish them both extremely well in their continuing work—those brave men and women who do front-line emergency service for us every year.

0940

As many of you will recall, I have a master's background in labour management relations. I taught at Seneca for a number of years and I consulted in the field. It's an old adage in labour relations that when you bring amendments forward, you want to make everybody unhappy, the reason being that you don't want to be overbalancing in favour of one party or the other. So you inevitably, in most labour relations situations, make all parties a little unhappy. If one party is too happy, maybe the balance has gone too far the other way. I believe that this legislation is striking the appropriate balance.

I know that the member for Niagara Falls was a trade union representative. I was typically on the other side of the fence as a management representative in some of the work I did as a consultant. It was always the experience that in previous administrations, we used to call the minister not the Minister of Labour but the minister for labour because maybe the balance was going the wrong way. I'm pleased to see that our ministry and our government are getting the balance right here.

I used to teach at Seneca about how important this balance is. I would teach, in the general labour relations field, about how important it is to get proper procedures in place for unfair labour practices and to have expedited arbitration processes and that we have the proper union security and the duty of fair representation that's contained in the act so that for the employer, the trade union and the employees it strikes the right balance so we have expedited processes and we're not tied up in court processes. I would teach this from the perspective of general labour relations. I wouldn't get into the weeds on the Fire Protection and Prevention Act; that wasn't part of our program.

Now what we're seeing is that those pieces that were missing in the original draft of the Fire Protection and

Prevention Act are now coming in under the Labour Relations Act, where we have, since the mid-1940s—post-war—first initiated this type of legislation for collective bargaining, which constitutionally recognizes the right of employees to come together, to unionize, to be certified, and to collectively represent themselves in their discussions with employers. So this is really important.

What we're also seeing in this piece of legislation is giving the power to arbitrators to enforce a written grievance settlement—it brings those powers forward—or for an arbitration decision from either party to be able to take to the Superior Court of Justice so it can be enforced as an order under the court. Likewise, the Ontario Labour Relations Board will have an opportunity, where necessary, to grant interim orders against parties, which will provide more stability and streamline labour relations processes.

I wanted to speak specifically to that aspect of the bill because I do think we're getting the balance right. But we will be taking a look more closely at some of the issues that were raised by the member for Niagara Falls. I recognize him and respect him as an expert from that point of view. I look forward very much to delving more into those details as we go forward with the debate of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I'm pleased to follow my colleague the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and, of course, my colleague from Beaches—East York.

As I stand today to talk to Bill 109, we've had a lot of focus right now on the firefighters, which I think is an important piece and I'll get to that in my presentation as well, but we're also looking at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, 1997, and, as I said, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997. I think my colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell said earlier that it's 18 years later; it's 18 years now that we're looking at trying to update some of our laws. I think it's important that we talk about how things and times have changed in those 18 years, Mr. Speaker.

For us, I think it's important that we try to talk about all of the positive things that we're trying to put in place, Mr. Speaker, and also debate the ones that some see as contentious.

I know it has been brought up a couple of times—it may not necessarily have been brought up this morning. As I've been sitting here listening to the hours of debate that relate to this bill, we've talked about some of the amendments. Some people were talking about the amendments on claims suppression. I think, Mr. Speaker, it is important to put on record that not reporting a workplace accident is a violation of the WSIA. The WSIB uses a zero-tolerance strategy to try and stop claims suppression.

I know that our government's proposed change aims to strengthen the WSIB's efforts by legislating stronger deterrents against employers engaged in any activities to suppress or impede the reporting of a work-related injury

or illness to the WSIB by a worker. I think I heard earlier my honourable colleague from the third party talking about schemes that are happening in some workplaces in relation to trying to get a worker not to report an injury or not reporting an illness. I think it's important that it be recognized that that shouldn't be happening. We need to ensure that the WSIB has stronger legislation to be able to try and stop these claim suppressions.

I think, if we're looking at claim suppressions, it can include a range of activities, from an informal agreement between the employer and the worker for paid leave as an inducement for not reporting, to more aggressive approaches such as threatening dismissal or other employment-related penalties upon the worker. Our proposal would add a specific prohibition in the WSI Act against employers engaging. No employer should engage in any activity with the intent to impede a worker from reporting a claim with the WSIB or induce them to withdraw a claim that has already been filed.

If any employer does engage in these activities, they will be subject to administrative penalties and/or prosecution. I think that's an important aspect to ensure that we get on the record today, to talk about some of the benefits and some of the proposals that are coming out in this bill.

Also, I know the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change spoke about firefighters who he has dealt with, both as a recovering mayor, as he said, and again as an MPP and a minister. My colleague from Beaches—East York and colleagues from the opposition have spoken about this as well.

If you'll bear with me, Mr. Speaker, I had a great opportunity a few years back. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt attended this as well. It was called Firefighters 101, where SPFFA Local 527 in Greater Sudbury put together an opportunity for community leaders to learn a little bit about their job. They geared us all up and we went through many exercises—many difficult exercises—to learn what their job is like.

Even though I knew I was in a safe environment, when they brought us into this firehouse where flames were rolling over the top of the roof—you know you're in a secure environment, but it's still very intimidating and scary. Imagine not being able to see your hand in front of your own face. It's one of those things where you're really grateful for the work that our firefighters do each and every day, because when we're running out, they're running in. We need to do everything we can to acknowledge that and thank them for that.

For the last seven years, I've been holding a barbecue in my riding to say thank you to all our emergency services workers: police, fire and paramedics. For firefighters specifically, it's one of those where, with these changes that we're putting in place, I think it's important for us to make sure that we get it right for our firefighters and to make sure that, as we say, we provide them with the tools to resolve disputes in the fire sector, because they've got the tools to keep us safe.

With that, we say thank you to them, and I'd like to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being able to stand today and be part of this presentation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: It's a real honour to speak to this bill, Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015, along with my colleagues. We've had a very wholesome discussion from all sides, and I would like to thank the members from the opposition and the third party for their comments as well. One thing that becomes very clear to me is that we're all very passionate about this bill, and we are passionate about protecting the rights of workers.

The member from Niagara Falls mentioned something about being serious about labour, and the one thing I can say wholeheartedly is that each and every member in this House—particularly in this party, because I don't speak for others except my own party—is very serious about labour.

It's a comprehensive bill. It's bringing together three acts, as has already been discussed.

0950

I would also like to commend the member from Nickel Belt for her comments talking about the survivor benefits. This is one area that is of great concern to me as well: the issue with how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who dies of an occupational disease and who had no or low earnings on the date of the diagnosis because they were retired. This situation can arise because of the long latency period before the onset of many work-related diseases such as cancer. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change has also very eloquently spoken to that as well, so I thank him for his comments.

One of the reasons why that particular piece of the legislation is very important to me is because I've worked in a constituency office; I have seen individuals who have gone through this process and who don't have enough protection built into legislation, so I'm very pleased that we are bringing this forward. I'm also very impressed by the Minister of Labour. He has visited Kingston and the Islands, and we have had some discussions with the paramedics. We've discussed a number of issues with them.

Just to go back to the survivor benefits section of this bill: Right now, in situations where a worker dies of an occupational disease and has no or low earnings at the time of their diagnosis because they were retired, the WSIB's operational practice is to calculate survivor benefits based on whichever is greater, the average amount of annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade in which the worker's disease was contracted, or the worker's annual earnings in the 12 months prior to the date of diagnosis, rather than the statutory minimum provided under the WSIA. Now, I know that that's not always appropriate. I think that it's extremely important that this proposed amendment will allow them to continue their practice, which has been challenged on appeal.

I'm pleased that the Minister of Labour has brought forward this very comprehensive bill. It's an honour to speak to it. I thank my colleagues in the House for bringing their thoughtful comments forward as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I know there were 10 seconds left there of the government's 20 minutes. There were about five members that spoke to it. I thought maybe a sixth would get up and use those 10 seconds. It's their portion to speak to this very comprehensive bill—most speaking for probably only three or four minutes on what they've claimed is very comprehensive and important; however, they've only spent three or four minutes.

I will comment on the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change's comments—a very passionate discussion on his personal experience with firefighters. I would like to thank our critic, obviously, Ted Arnott, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, for his work with this, but also, going back some years ago, recognizing the hard work, dedication, and importance of double-hatters in communities. They are full-time employees or workers for the day but volunteer and give to their local departments at all hours of the day—recognizing the importance that they bring to small, rural communities.

Of course, I'll have a greater opportunity to speak to this bill at length, and I will of course take the full allotted time to do so, because I want to talk a lot about some of the recent issues we've had in my community, in my riding of Kitchener–Conestoga, when it comes to WSIB benefits and the potential for the presumptive cancer legislation as it pertains to benefits and payouts, should either a double-hatter or a full-time, part-time or volunteer firefighter—God forbid they are diagnosed with a presumptive cancer.

I look forward to my briefing today with the Ministry of Labour on this particular bill. I did work with them previously, alongside the critic from Wellington–Halton Hills, on this issue in the last session. I look forward to taking my 10 to 20 minutes because it is a comprehensive bill, and I think that's the time that needs to be used to speak effectively to this bill. Thank you for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to address some comments that were made by some of the members from the government. First, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Toronto Centre, talked about being supportive of firefighters and supportive of labour. I believe he is being genuine in his remarks. However, he also talked about the importance of unions, addressing issues like precarious labour and low-paid jobs and their long history in this province and across this country of being advocates in all kinds of policy improvements in government. But at the same time, this government is interfering with the basic rights of workers in this same bill. He didn't address that, that in fact they want to take away the right to choose which union would represent you at the end of the day. If you supported labour, you wouldn't be doing that. You wouldn't be pitting firefighters against every other public sector union and some private sector unions here in the province of Ontario.

The other thing is that the member from Beaches–East York talked about his labour management training and consulting, and that the balance is to make everybody unhappy at the end of the day, to kind of keep everybody off balance. I don't know; in my 40 years of negotiating, we tried to get win-wins, so that everybody was happy, not lose-lose. So I don't think I'd be hiring him as a consultant.

My third point—I'm glad the Minister of Health is here, because you know what? If this government really cared about workers, we would not have nurses from CarePartners on strike for eight months. The government would be intervening and making sure that for-profit companies that are hired by this government through the LHIN to look after patients in this province were actually back working and not on a picket line in this province of Ontario. That's what you should be doing for the workers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015.

Our firefighters sacrifice so much to help keep Ontarians safe, and we are grateful for the work that they do. In return, it is up to us to ensure that they, too, are protected. Firefighters deserve and should have the rights and protections afforded by the Labour Relations Act.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that before I came to this House and before I started working with government, I was a journalist. As a beat reporter, that meant, on occasion, going out to fires, going out to accidents on highways and going out to crime scenes before anybody else really arrived. A lot of times we were there just with the first responders.

I have seen first-hand the work, the hard, tough, courageous work that our firefighters do. I have seen them go in and out of buildings, coming back, making sure that they're being cooled down, making sure that they're getting on respirators to help them breathe, putting their suits back on again and going back in. I've seen this in warm weather, and I have seen it in minus-40-degree weather. I've been out there watching and having nothing but praise and confidence in these people who put their lives on the line for all of us to help keep us safe and secure in our homes, buildings and places of work.

So I have the utmost respect for our firefighters and for the people Bill 109 would be trying to safeguard. It is trying to bring greater safeguards to all workers in the province through making changes to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act doing four main things: ensuring that workers know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim and that it is their right to be protected. Secondly, we must do all that we can to make sure that these workers are protected by proposing an increase in maximum corporate penalties for conviction of an offence under WSIA. We also have to provide greater fairness for survivors in cases of work-related deaths.

Those are just some of the things. As a whole and individually, these proposed amendments, if passed through Bill 109, would protect the people of this province and also protect those who work to help keep us safe. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have this opportunity this morning to respond to the government members who spoke on Bill 109 at second reading, the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, the member for Beaches–East York, the member for Sudbury and the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I think it's also important to point out that the government side had 20 minutes to make a presentation this morning on this bill. We go in rotation, as you well know, Mr. Speaker. Four government members spoke in that 20-minute slot.

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We know what's coming, based on the way the government is handling legislation through this House. At some point, after a few hours of debate on Bill 109, the government House leader will become impatient with the progress in the debate, even though there will be countless members of the opposition who will want to speak to this bill. At some point, the government, most likely, based on what they're doing on a number of other important pieces of legislation, will stand up and start saying, "X number of members have spoken to this bill." They actually have four members speaking to this bill in one 20-minute slot in order to inflate that number and suggest that everybody has had a chance to speak.

The fact is, there will be, I expect, a significant number of opposition members who will want to speak to this bill. I would urge the minister responsible, the Minister of Labour, to use his influence to encourage the government House leader to allow the opposition members to do their job. There will be members of the Legislature on the opposition side who will want to speak about the fire services in their ridings and provide input from their ridings as to what's happening in their respective constituencies, and they should be allowed to do that. I know that there will be a significant number of members who will want to discuss this bill, and I would urge the government to make that possible.

In terms of my response, I've had a chance to speak for an hour on this bill, so I'm not complaining about my own situation. I had ample opportunity, but I will continue to respond to questions and comments as Bill 109 continues to be debated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I return to the government side. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I will be forever indebted to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills. I think this is the first time someone has actually suggested I didn't speak long enough. You are my dearest friend now, sir.

I also want to thank the member for Niagara Falls. He raised a very difficult issue, because this has been a

debate in labour: whether unions that have 60% or more automatically assume, as the majority membership, or whether it should be a vote. While he may disagree with the government, he is probably aware, as am I, that this is a very active debate amongst our brothers and sisters in different unions. There isn't a consensus, at least certainly in the representations I've seen. But I do appreciate him raising it. There's a coffee shop downstairs, and I'm always open to be educated; I'm happy to do that.

I just want to reflect on members on all sides. I thought this was a thoughtful debate. We often slip easily into partisan roles or forget we're people who all came here hoping to honour our parents and our grandparents, to make sure our kids inherit something better than we inherited from our parents. Given our inheritance, it's pretty tough to leave a better legacy than our moms and grandmoms gave us. I want to thank members as we go forward on this bill.

I hope, as the member for Welland said, that we can take time to look at other opportunities. I don't say that flippantly. There are constraints as we get back to balance, obviously, but that doesn't stop us from doing a lot of human rights things and a lot of advancement of things that don't cost money.

We both come from parties—and all of us have different traditions and experiences, sometimes in more than one party, and share some common roots, and I think a lot of people elect us hoping that we'll be more collaborative and co-operative and be Ontarians before we're partisans.

I think this debate was emblematic, and I thank all members for honouring our firefighters with such a mature debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to add a few comments to this debate on Bill 109.

First of all, I think we need to give people an understanding of the main tenets of Bill 109. It encompasses three areas that, while they each have to do with labour, are completely different in their response to a particular issue in areas of labour. When you put together three areas, as this piece of legislation does, you get the same problem: that there's a poison pill or there is something there that you are fully supportive of but something that you're equally concerned about. This has nothing to do with which government—governments of all stripes in the last few decades have tended to do this. But what effect it has, then, is to cast everything with the same brush, because at the end of the day, it's only one vote. You are either for it or against it.

I see this as a problem that is obviously to the benefit of the executive area of government, because they can move this piece of legislation and its various parts along and it makes it easier for them, but it diminishes the job of the legislator, and that is the fact that they are faced with the same dilemma in terms of their response to three separate issues that have been put together. I say this in the spirit of, as I said, governments of all stripes, but as

members of the Legislature, we should remember that we owe a duty to our constituents in being able to discuss these issues.

The areas are quite different. I certainly want to comment on the first segment of the bill, which deals with changes to the firefighters. I have stood alongside those members of the House—again, in all parties—who have recognized the value of and the past injustices to the double-hatter. Representing a constituency which I think still relies, in all cases—there's a volunteer component to each of the firefighting stations in my riding, in my communities. It has always been an issue that I've felt very strongly about, that when someone is prepared to offer their volunteer professional time, the communities are the beneficiaries.

I've spoken at firefighters' appreciation evenings where I've been able to remind the public of the kind of training—and the hours and hours of upgrading of training—that volunteer firefighters must perform before they get on a truck. I think it's really important that the legislation, as we see here today, recognizes the legitimacy and puts that problem, that issue, behind us. I think that that's particularly valuable.

However, the part of the bill that I think requires greater attention is the third part, on the WSIB. The WSIB, in the time that I've been in this Legislature, sort of comes and goes in terms of issues of legislation, directives or changes in policy.

I think that there are a few principles that one has to keep in mind when you're looking at issues around the WSIB. Obviously, it has to be just. I look at some of the members of my community who, frankly, have suffered a great deal through injury at work, through no fault of their own. In establishing those principles, obviously you want something that is fair and just for people who have received, in some cases, lifelong encumbrances and problems with the accidents that they've had. So, justice and balance.

The attitude of most employers is obviously that it's good business to have a safe place, and they work very hard at providing opportunities for training and things like that, to make sure that there is that balance on the employer side. The other area, of course, is the cost of what is being provided.

The final point is that it has to be evidence-based. I found, when I started looking at this part of the bill, that there was an issue that seemed to be one of long standing, and that was the one of claim suppression. I know that others have spoken about it in their comments, but this is something that strikes me as very difficult, because of the fact that you have to prove that something happened. You also have to prove some kind of intent.

There has been quite a lot of work done over the years on this issue of claim suppression. Obviously, no one with any sense of fairness wants to witness this or be involved in it; that's not the issue. The issue is providing the research on this particular issue, so I did a bit of looking around and found that this isn't the first time claim suppression has shown up as something of interest in

legislation. There have been a number of studies that have been done to try to come to some understanding and agreement on this.

You can't base laws on anecdotal information. In June 2005, the report of the Institute of Work and Health, Assessing the Effects of Experience Rating in Ontario, came up with a couple of comments. The study found that "the large majority of employees stated that they are being encouraged to report accidents and incidents and are being offered suitable modified and early return to work if injured."

The 2005 report also found, "Our research indicates that experience rating encourages prevention and contributes to positive workplace health and safety practices." So there are some studies, then, going back 10 years, that have looked at this kind of thing.

In more recent times, the WSIB commissioned a Prism economic analysis and looked at some of the information there. The Prism report defines claim suppression: "For the purpose of this research, 'claim suppression' means actions taken by an employer to induce a worker not to report an injury or illness or alternatively to under-report the severity of an injury or illness or the amount of lost time attributable to that injury or illness. The inducement may be coercive, i.e., the inducement may involve an actual or perceived threat of sanctions. Alternatively the inducement may be accommodating, i.e., the employer may offer the worker benefits in lieu of workers' compensation, if full WSIB benefits, especially lost time benefits, are not claimed."

Mr. Speaker, I believe I have the opportunity to pick up later, and I'd like to stay at this particular part of my presentation, if I might.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, An Assessment of the Financial Impact of the Partial Sale of Hydro One.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I just want to take this opportunity to wish the member for Nepean–Carleton a happy birthday.

Mr. John Fraser: We have some people joining us from the Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists. We have Beth Linkewich, the president; she's joined by

Christine Brenchley, a director; and as well, Lesya Dyk is here today. They have a reception at 11:30 in room 228. I hope you all can join us.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to introduce page Victoria Gates's family who are here today: her mother, Jacqueline Gates; her father, Jeff Gates; grandparents Scott and Sharon Gates; and her grandmother Sandra Armstrong. Thank you for joining us today at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome grade 10 students and staff from St. Marcellinus Secondary School in my great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. They are visiting Queen's Park today. I wish them a very pleasant and educational time here.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my great pleasure to welcome His Excellency the consul general of Turkey, Mr. Erdeniz Sen, and the members of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations who are here today. We are celebrating the 92nd anniversary of the Turkish republic. There will be a flag-raising at the south grounds, and I invite all members of the House to participate in this wonderful event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome. I hope the wind is not too bad for you at noon hour.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce Sebastian Lingertat from my riding of St. Paul's who is our page captain today. I'd also like to introduce his grandparents James and Irene VanLeeuwen, and his aunt Annette, who are here with us today in the gallery.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My intern from OLIP just made her way in. Ça me fait plaisir de vous présenter Olivia Labonté, qui est dans mon bureau pour cette session. Welcome, Olivia.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted to introduce Derek and Robyn Shepherd, who are in the east gallery today, parents of our page captain Gavin Shepherd, who is a student at Bowmore in Beaches–East York. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: On behalf of the MPP from Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, and on behalf of page Abby Moreside, I'd like to welcome her mother, Kathy Moreside, and her grandmother Gerda Stefan, who will be in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm not sure if he's here yet, but I'd like to introduce Lorne Kenney, a former candidate in the riding of Simcoe–Grey.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier got caught. She got caught giving away millions of dollars to teachers' unions with nothing in return. Then her government came up with a multitude of excuses. Let's go over the timeline. On Wednesday it was "business as usual." Last Thursday it was, "We don't

need receipts.” Monday it was, “This is certainly not business as usual.” Tuesday it was, “It will never happen again.” Yesterday it was, “The unions must produce receipts.” Every day is a different storyline. Even open soap operas have longer storylines than this government. Seriously, Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable.

Will the Acting Premier confirm that the government’s position hasn’t changed again today, because there have been six positions in a week?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think what we have demonstrated is a firm commitment to the well-being of students in our classrooms and we have demonstrated evidence of the success of students. This process has been successful. Students have remained in the classroom. They are getting the education that they need to be successful.

So let’s just remember, these negotiations have been difficult. It is in line with our net-zero bargaining process that I would hope the Leader of the Opposition would support—a net-zero bargaining process. We have done this without making any cuts to the classroom whatsoever.

This new process did require resources. We are in a time of transition so that in future, negotiations will go much more smoothly and require much less time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The only commitment this government has demonstrated is to the Liberal Party. The government said \$2.5 million was to go for pizza parties and sleepovers. If that excuse was real, the government would have asked for receipts from the start, even though the public now suspects the money was really just for the government’s own purposes, for their own partisan purposes. The arrogance is astounding. This government is eroding public confidence in the education system.

Does the Premier not understand that her multi-million-dollar union payouts have undermined the integrity of our education system and the people who work in it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It’s becoming increasingly clear that what this party and what this leader wants to do is continue the attack on our partners in education—the unions and federations. For him to ridicule the bargaining process and describe it as a sleepover and pizza party demonstrates as clearly as anything he said that he has no respect whatsoever for the collective bargaining process or for the federations that represent our teachers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: This party values our educators. What we will not stand for is the attacks on the classroom. And do you know what? If this government doesn’t want to listen to the public, if they don’t want to listen to the constructive advice of the official opposition, well maybe you can listen to the Toronto Star. The Toronto Star op-ed yesterday said, “If the payments made from the government to the unions really were necessary, then there is no reason they should have been kept hidden from the public.”

“Payments of \$2.5 million, which were kept hidden from the public ... seem almost impossible to defend.” The payments are impossible to defend because they were made for political purposes.

Will the deputy leader of the Ontario Liberal Party commit to giving back the millions of dollars she has taken from Ontario’s classrooms? No more spin, no more excuses. Yes or no? Will you pay the money back?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite talks about his party’s commitment to the classroom. Well, let me just remind the third party of what their record was when we took office back in 2003. At that time, one out of every three kids was not graduating from high school. One in three high school students did not graduate. We have been able to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting down is not helpful, nor is other heckling from the government side helpful.

Please finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been able to raise the graduation rate to 84% and we continue to improve programs there.

So let’s make it very clear: The cost of this successful process with unions was offset by savings in the collective agreement, including early discounted payment of retirement gratuities, lowering the cost of sick leave and making the delivery of professional development more efficient. We’re getting—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1040

TEACHERS’ COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Acting Premier. Can the Acting Premier, with a straight face, guarantee us today that not one red cent of the millions of dollars funnelled to teachers’ unions was spent on third-party election ads, to the benefit of the Liberal Party?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, she can’t guarantee us because she’s part—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Start the clock. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: We’ll see how their votes are on Wednesday when the auditor is asked to look at these transactions, or the Financial Accountability Officer this morning when it comes to trust of their government. She’s part of the chain that sees teachers’ unions spend millions on election ads one year and receive millions back to cover hotel and pizza costs the next. “You scratch my back; I’ll scratch yours,” leading to questions of tax-

payers' money funding election ads. Yet, just this month, her government again reminded us that the Liberal Party will "be strengthening Ontario's rules on third-party advertising," only minutes before rejecting our call on proposed strengthening restrictions.

Speaker, they understand there's a problem. It seems that the only ones who don't understand that there's something inherently wrong here is them. If she can't guarantee where our money's been spent, will the Acting Premier deliver on the promise—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you. I'd like to remind everyone that where this whole discussion started was on the implementation of a new collective bargaining act. The bargaining under that act in question actually has led to three successful, ratified collective agreements with the English Catholic teachers, with the secondary teachers in the English public system and with the French teachers in both the French public and French Catholic systems.

Those were long processes because we were working through a new process. And, yes, we were pleased to invest in making sure that process happened. As the Premier said yesterday, there will be accountability.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Michael Harris: It also led to millions of dollars to unions to run election ads that benefited the Liberal Party. Even the Toronto Star is calling on the Premier to "deliver on that pledge and ensure no future government will be tainted by the suspicion of unfairly funding lavish third-party campaigns." We agree, Speaker, yet instead the Premier refuses to live up to her word and diverts attention to flip-flop on the need for receipts just to justify those continued payouts. Just follow the money, Speaker, and she'll know what's on those receipts: millions of dollars-plus in partisan, third-party election advertising bills. It's time to end this tired taxpayer-funded charade.

Will the Acting Premier tell us if we will see the promised new regulations to halt potential government payouts for third-party advertising before any further millions are handed over to those unions?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would like to repeat that what we have done is transform the collective bargaining system. We were able to get net zero. As the Premier said, the particular payments in question have not yet flowed. There will be an accountability process. As I said yesterday, there will be accountability. There will be a schedule of permissible things, which certainly do not include third-party advertising—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —and that there will be verification required of those permissible payments that are allowed.

I think what we need to understand is that, in fact, that is part of our net zero, and the net-zero payments and increases to compensation are offset by early discounted payout of retirement gratuities, lowering the cost of sick leave—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This morning's FAO report—sorry, to the Acting Premier, Speaker. This morning's FAO report shows what New Democrats have been saying all along. We have been saying it for months: the sell-off of Hydro One is a bad deal for the families and businesses of this province. While the Premier has been telling Ontarians over and over again that the sell-off will raise \$4 billion for infrastructure and transit, the FAO report shows that the sell-off could raise as little as \$1.4 billion—a fraction of what she has been promising. Will this Premier and her government stop the unnecessary and short-sighted sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do want to take this opportunity to thank the Financial Accountability Officer, Stephen LeClair, for his report. I welcome his assessment of our plan to broaden the ownership of Hydro One.

Let's not forget, Speaker, that this is all about building infrastructure. We're making historic investments in infrastructure: \$130 billion over the next 10 years to build that badly needed infrastructure right across the province. We need to build that infrastructure. Broadening the ownership of Hydro One allows us to make those investments today, not 10 years down the road. Experts have called for an increase in infrastructure spending—up to 5% of our GDP. This will help us get there.

I think the member also has to recognize that not making investments in infrastructure has a cost as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has been claiming that the sell-off of Hydro One will raise \$4 billion for transit and infrastructure, but the FAO clearly shows today that the sell-off could generate just \$1.4 billion. Speaker, \$1.4 billion is just 1%—1%—of the Premier's \$130 billion of infrastructure and transit promises, and yet the Premier would have the people of Ontario believe that it is essential for her to sell off our most public, our most trusted, most important public asset for that 1%. Just 1%, and the Premier wants us to lose control of our electricity system and put the future of Ontario's financial well-being in jeopardy. This is a terrible deal and it makes no sense whatsoever. Will the Premier and her government stop this insane sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Clearly, what the leader of the third party does not understand is that there is a link between broadening the ownership of Hydro One and investments in infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure has a payoff as well, Speaker. The Conference Board of Canada says that for every \$100 million invested in infrastructure, about \$114 million is produced in real GDP, a

payoff of 14%. That is a real return on investment. That is a return on investment that benefits all Ontarians. We do need to make investments in infrastructure. The leader of the third party has a couple of ideas, neither of which hold water. We're moving forward with our plan to build up Ontario. We're moving forward with our plan to build badly needed infrastructure. The people of Ontario support that infrastructure investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The FAO report provides Ontarians with the very first independent analysis of this Premier's wrong-headed sell-off. At \$4 billion, this sell-off was unnecessary in the first place. It was a bad deal at \$4 billion; at \$1.4 billion, it is ludicrous that the Premier would even consider it. Speaker, \$1.4 billion works out to \$140 million per year over 10 years. If the Premier cannot find \$140 million from other sources, then she and her Minister of Finance and her Minister of Energy and her chair of Treasury Board should just step aside.

Will this Premier and her Liberal government commit to Ontarians today to stop the unnecessary sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to thank the Financial Accountability Officer for his report. I recognize how important it is for us to have that open and transparent engagement. We've had a strong and positive relationship with the FAO, and it is indeed the first such report by any province, recognizing that we're building on the very things that we've enacted. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the Financial Accountability Officer made no reference—and he purposely said so—in terms of the net benefit that comes from the broadening of ownership and the reinvestment of those dollars into new investments and new issues to stimulate the economy.

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Nor does it talk about the appreciation of the value of this company, because we recognize that Hydro One has been underperforming and can do better—which, by the way, we will continue to own and still benefit from dividends over time.

This is going forward for the benefit of the people and for the reinvestment—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. The FAO report shows once again the contempt that this Liberal government and this Premier have for the people of Ontario. It has been repeated by this finance minister and by this chair of Treasury Board just this morning.

They have been promising \$4 billion from the sell-off of Hydro One at every opportunity. Yet we now learn that they could get \$1.4 billion spread over 10 years. That \$140 million a year is only 0.001% of the province's

budget. That's gross incompetency if you cannot find room in your budget, without selling Hydro One, to fund \$140 million each year over 10 years.

Will this Acting Premier commit today to stopping the sell-off of Hydro One and finding a better way to raise that money?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the report very clearly states and affirms that the valuation of Hydro One is going to net the province a substantive amount of dollars to reinvest in infrastructure. The member opposite is speculating on the valuation of Hydro One, which we'll know in short order, because the market will bear that price. But more importantly—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are on track. We are on track to provide over \$9 billion in receipts to this government, of which \$5 billion will go towards debt and the additional \$4 billion will be reinvested in infrastructure. What we want to ensure is that we build without borrowing—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Essex.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're taking a very careful and staged approach by broadening the ownership of Hydro One, unlike the reckless plan that was proposed by the official opposition. We recognize that these things are important, and we have a greater benefit for society—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The NDP demanded the creation of the Financial Accountability Office so that we could catch Liberal scandals before they actually happened. It is a good thing that we did, Speaker. Without the FAO, Ontarians would never have known that the sell-off of Hydro One would earn billions of dollars less than what the Premier has promised.

This time, we can actually stop another bad deal before it costs Ontario families and businesses billions and billions of dollars.

Will this Acting Premier commit today to stopping the unnecessary, the wrong-headed, the financially inappropriate sell-off of Hydro One before it's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Trinity–Spadina and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, would you please come to order while the question is being put, and the answer, subsequently?

Minister of Finance

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is one of the largest investment transactions in the history of our province. It is because we recognize that this asset is underperforming and we know it can do better. That is why we proceeded in this way. We're taking only a 15% stake so we can see

and exactly assess its value. We are taking a proper and careful approach, and we're on track to achieve the results.

But what this is about is investing in Hamilton, investing in public transit and investing in families so that they can get to and from home more quickly and more safely. It is about making us more competitive in the long term. That is what we're doing.

We're ensuring that we continue to build without borrowing. The member opposite and the champagne socialists would prefer us to borrow in perpetuity. We cannot do that. We've got to be fiscally responsible and we are doing so here.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would remind all of us, but I'd like to acknowledge to the minister, that those are the kinds of things that don't help or engage in good dialogue and good debate. I would challenge all of us to race to the top and not to the bottom.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait. Start the clock.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: When the Premier formed her privatization panel, she said that the process would be "transparent ... and independently validated." It has been anything but transparent. Even now, the government is withholding documents from the Financial Accountability Officer. Now, the first independent analysis, even without those documents, has been done, and it clearly says that this is a bad deal for Ontarians and that the Premier should keep Hydro public.

Will this Liberal government follow the advice of the Financial Accountability Officer and commit today to stopping the sell-off of Hydro One before this project that the Liberals have on their docket actually turns into the next Liberal boondoggle, a billion-dollar Liberal boondoggle, for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We've acted in accordance and consistent with the 2013 Financial Accountability Officer Act, which we brought forward and which was agreed to by this entire House unanimously, to ensure that the confidentiality of cabinet documents is upheld. I will not break the law that I'm entitled to report to, and we will continue to abide by that.

More importantly, we are investing in the things that matter most to Ontarians. We are taking an asset that is underperforming, recognizing that we can do better, and ensuring that we protect others. We're going to be competing with Hydro One and Horizon, as well as Brampton hydro, all of which are actually performing much better than Toronto Hydro. This is an opportunity for us to provide greater discipline and, in the end, more value for that operation, greater dividends to shareholders, of which we will own 85% after the first tranche.

The member opposite is actually suggesting that regulated companies should be owned by the province. In that regard, we might as well buy Enbridge Gas.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. Not only is the sell-off of Hydro One the worst deal in the province's history, it's resulted in another scandal this morning. Speaker, you'd think this government would have learned this week about doing things behind closed doors, but I guess some people never learn.

We learned from the Financial Accountability Officer this morning, in his report to the Legislature, that the FAO cannot reproduce the council's estimate because the province has deemed this methodology to be a cabinet record and has chosen not to release it.

Once again this week, a member of the opposition has to stand up here in the Legislature and ask the government what it is hiding. Why is there so much information the government doesn't want the public to have? I guess I'm asking the minister responsible for Ornge this question this morning.

Will the Acting Premier commit to turning over all of the cabinet documents related to the sale of Hydro One to the Financial Accountability Officer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If we're going to talk about the worst deal in the history of Ontario, I would like to nominate the Highway 407 sell-off.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm reminded that the 407 was valued at about \$12 billion, and I believe you sold it—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll do it again. When I said if it continues, I'll stand again. It's your time.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It was sold for a fraction of its value, maybe about 25% of its value. It was sold once, the whole thing, 100%. As my colleague likes to say, first we paid to pave it, now we pay to drive all over it—the worst deal ever.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Speaker, I know that asking this government to be transparent is quite an ask, and asking them to be transparent is kind of like taking business ethics lessons from Bernie Madoff. That's what this is like, asking you guys to be transparent.

In his report this morning, the FAO goes on to state that the FAO has requested more information on the calculation of future net income, but the province has determined this information to be a cabinet record and has chosen not to release it.

It turns out that if you work for the Financial Accountability Officer, the government doesn't want to give you any information, but they can't slip it to their

friends in the media fast enough. Asked about the leak to the Toronto Star this morning, the FAO said he would have to rethink releasing documents to the government 48 hours before the public. Even officers of the Legislature can't trust these guys.

Speaker, will the minister commit to releasing all cabinet documents about the sale of Hydro One to the public? Or is she actually going to stand in her place and tell the public—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, three important numbers here: 407. They put the 0 in 407. We got squat. We got a doughnut out of that deal.

What we're doing going forward: We've been very open and transparent. We've worked very closely with the FAO throughout this process to the extent that we can by law. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we do have a prospectus. We have full information that's outlined for the benefit of the entire public. As a result of the quiet period, we must also abide by the OSC.

The members opposite want us to break the law. We will not do that. We're protecting the interests of the public and we're going to reinvest all of the money, dollar for dollar, for the benefit of new—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order please. New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has stubbornly stood by her plan to sell Hydro One. Because of today's report of the Financial Accountability Officer on the Premier's plan to sell Hydro One, Ontarians now know that the province's finances will actually be harmed by the sale. Is that why the Premier chose to prevent the Financial Accountability Officer from accessing information needed to assess the province's estimate of the market value of Hydro One, citing cabinet confidentiality?

Can the Acting Premier tell Ontarians why she chose not to disclose information about her privatization plan either from the Ministry of Finance, from energy, from Mr. Ed Clark's panel, or even the \$7.5 million in consultant reports that the people of this province already paid for?

Hydro One belongs to the people of this province. They have a right to know what's going on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the FAO makes reference to the flow of funds, recognizing that the province will net a tremendous amount of appreciation in its value with a broadening of its ownership. Deferred tax benefits and the net proceeds will be invested dollar for dollar into the Trillium Trust. The amount of the book

value goes to pay off debt, which I know the third party loves to increase, but we are not going to borrow to keep building. We must find ways to improve the net benefit as we proceed forward.

The forgone revenue that the member opposite talks about doesn't recognize the reinvestment value and the increased dividends that are appreciated from the ongoing operations of this company, which we will continue to own, Mr. Speaker. That will provide greater benefit overall.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The FAO was very clear this morning. The net debt will eventually be higher. He also said that it's a question of simple math. Clearly, this finance minister does not get that.

Mr. Speaker, the Financial Accountability Officer's role is to provide independent financial analysis about the province's finances to the people of this province. This is one of the reasons why it's so important that we now have this office. This government needs all the help that they can get.

If the Acting Premier has so much confidence in her plan to sell off Hydro One, why does she need to rely on cabinet confidentiality to shield it from the people of this province? What is she hiding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we've responded to this effect. We do have confidentiality requirements within the cabinet as, also, established in the FAO act, which we all agreed to. We also recognize that we have a prospectus and we have to abide by the OSC in regard to what we do next.

So we have a quiet period, but, at the same time, we want to maximize the net benefit on this transaction. That would be harmed based on what this member is asking us to do. Furthermore, what we do want in the end is to maximize the long-term revenues, stimulate the economy, improve our net benefit by reinvesting it. The FAO makes it very clear that he did not assess the net benefits or the ongoing opportunity; just the existence of the company as it stands today.

We know, and he has admitted, that this deal will have a positive effect for the province immediately, and the net benefit can be had as we proceed forward in reinvesting dollar for dollar in other assets to appreciate greater value for all of Ontario.

COMMUNITY POLICING

Ms. Harinder Malhi: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. The police officers in my community of Brampton-Springdale have a difficult job to do and work very hard every day to keep us safe. I often hear about the interactions between police officers and my community members, many of which are positive.

However, over the last several months, we have also heard from many Ontarians in communities across the province about the impact of street checks in their lives.

I had the opportunity to attend one of the street check consultations, which was held in my community of

Brampton-Springdale, where many people shared their lived experiences with these interactions. From these stories, I could appreciate just how deep the impact of street checks goes, and I could see that this is an issue that affects not just the people of my community, but people across our province.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please explain what he is doing to resolve this important and ongoing concern?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member for asking a very important and relevant question.

I would like to, first, thank the hundreds of people who came out to the consultations that we hosted across the province, those who provided their feedback and submissions through the online process, and, most importantly, the young people I got the opportunity to meet with, who shared their lived experiences during this entire process. Speaker, I'm going to be very honest with you: Those were very difficult conversations, and they were very emotional conversations. I want to thank them for coming forward and sharing their stories with us.

We heard very clearly from the community that carding or street checks, by definition, are arbitrary as well as discriminatory and therefore cannot be improved or regulated; they simply must be ended. That is why our regulations have some important features that I will present to you during the supplementary.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: Thank you to the minister for that answer. I'm glad that the voices of my community and communities across our province have been heard and that you're taking action to prohibit random and arbitrary stops. This is an important step in ensuring bias-free policing in Ontario and in helping to build trust between our police officers and the communities that they serve. I know that police officers in my community will be able to continue to do the excellent work that they do keeping us safe, while having clear and consistent rules to follow when engaging in public interactions.

But, Mr. Speaker, the changes that the minister is proposing as part of the draft regulations are considerable, and Ontarians need to have confidence that the officers will have the necessary skills to adhere to them. Ontarians also need to know whether this training has been effective in removing bias from policing.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister please explain the training that the officers will undergo and what will be done to study the outcomes?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We had the opportunity to work, of course, with our policing partners and our community, human rights and civil liberty partners.

There are three key parts to this regulation. Number one, there is an express prohibition on random and arbitrary collection of personal information by the police. We are also introducing new rules to protect civil liberties during voluntary police-public interactions where there is a valid policing reason, such as informing individuals that they are not legally required to provide their information to the police officer. As the member mentioned, we are also requiring new training, data management,

reporting and other requirements to strengthen accountability and public confidence.

Speaker, we are asking the Ontario Police College to develop this new and mandatory training. We'll also be creating a panel of experts made up of police, human rights experts and racial issues experts who will work with the Ontario Police College in developing that training.

We are also launching a multi-year study to look into the effectiveness of this practice.

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PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Financial Accountability Officer confirmed today that the Hydro One fire sale is a terrible deal for Ontario. Stephen LeClair told us, "You will have immediate gains, but a loss of revenue over the long term." He was very clear that "the province would realize a permanent deterioration in budget balance as a result of the transaction." Further, he said that "the province would experience an ongoing negative impact on budget balance from forgone net income and payments-in-lieu of taxes from Hydro One."

It cannot be any clearer than this. Minister, the jury is in. Will you advise the Premier to stop this rock-headed fire sale?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. To the Chair, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Wow, this is great, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite comes from the party that was proposing to sell 100% of this company, which would have been a reckless plan. As I mentioned before—and they have a history of doing so. In fact—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Furthermore, they actually filled in holes on infrastructure projects that would have been of great benefit to our society and our community today. We will not be wrong-headed and we're not going to put our heads in that sand—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't intend to shout over people that are shouting, but I will get attention and I'll ask the member from Simcoe-Grey to come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO validates our approach in a staged and careful way to ensure that we protect the interests of the parties of concern.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO makes it clear that we are reducing debt, we are paying down debt and we're retaining a substantive amount for reinvestment to produce new assets. The FAO didn't go on to the issues around

what those assets may be. He didn't talk about the fact that forgone revenue will be replaced with new investments, new revenue, stronger dividends and a stronger company. That benefits everyone—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the minister: I don't know what report that minister read, but Stephen LeClair told us that this will create "permanent deterioration" in the budget. This is strictly a financing decision; nothing to do with infrastructure.

Now their plan is clear. The actual proceeds from this Hydro One sale are very little. But it's just enough to make their books look good for a couple of years, bringing us to the next election. Then it all goes downhill for Ontario from there.

The minister and the Premier have been exposed yet again. So I ask: Will you put an end to this charade and stop the fire sale of Hydro One?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, we are going to build. And we're not going to keep borrowing to build; we're going to make sure that we reinvest assets that we own, and we can do better.

We looked at a number of assets. We said very clearly in the budget that we would. We realized that some of our assets and properties actually have tremendous value—we wouldn't be able to get a greater net benefit, but for this one we can. He knows we can because they evaluated and they recognized that we can do better than what Hydro One is doing right now. That's exactly why we're taking a very careful, staged approach to ensure greater value for that operation and reinvest dollar for dollar into our economy.

The FAO makes it clear that he did not assess what those reinvestments would accrue to the province—that stimulus that would be created. He also didn't assess the valuation of those dividends over time, nor should we speculate at this time because it's a quiet period. But we know because a lot of people recognize that Toronto Hydro, Horizon and Enersource have greater value than Hydro One.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, you know that the Financial Accountability Officer works for this House. You know that the Financial Accountability Officer tables his report here in the Legislature. Why? Because he works for us, the members.

Imagine the surprise of many this morning when they wake up to find out in the paper that the entire content of his report has been leaked to the paper. It begs the question, because we know the Financial Accountability Officer said he didn't leak the information. He said so at the press conference this morning.

So who is it in your government who leaked that information to the paper? Will you come clean and tell us who that is?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We're very concerned about that report having been leaked as well. I can assure this member—I can assure everyone—that the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Finance or our offices did not leak the report. We did not walk the halls of Queen's Park yesterday. We are very sensitive to that secrecy. We respect the FAO. We respect his position. We want to ensure that we continue to operate in the appropriate manner and we want to ensure that that doesn't happen again, because that is confidential information, which we respect in this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Somehow, I think most of the people in this province would tend to trust that the Financial Accountability Officer didn't leak the report. So somebody in your government leaked that report because they're the only people who got the copy.

I'm going to say it again: You're denying that you're the guys who did it. If it wasn't the FAO, the only person it could have been is somebody within the Ministry of Energy or somebody within your own ministry.

Will you come clean and find out who that person is and let us know who leaked that report out to the public?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Energy did not leak the report. We want to make certain that those practices are indeed protected. I have no interest in investigating—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: The tooth fairy did it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll ask the third time—the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek come to order, second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I have no interest in investigating the media on this as well. The member opposite is making accusations I find offensive, because that is not the practice of this House.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. As the member for Halton and as a daily commuter, I know well just how important transit and transportation are to those living in my community. In fact, I often hear from my friends, neighbours and local residents about the impact their community has on their lives. My constituents want accessible and reliable transit at convenient times. They want to get to work quicker in the mornings and they want to get home faster at night so they can spend more time with their friends and families.

This is good for families. This is also good for our economy. With this in mind, can the minister please tell members of this House how our government is investing in transit and transportation in Halton and elsewhere to make the commute easier for Halton residents?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Halton for her strong representation for her community. Of course, this government continues to make key investments in transit and transportation infrastructure in Halton.

Since 2004, we have committed over \$5 million through the gas tax fund to the town of Milton to help improve and expand its transit services. As part of budget 2015, our government announced an investment of \$13.5 billion to increase transit ridership and reduce travel times across the GO network. This would include service every 15 minutes or better during the morning and afternoon peak periods along the Milton corridor. On top of these investments, we've committed over \$540 million in Halton region to improve and expand local highways, like the 401.

We know the importance of investing in transit and transportation infrastructure, and we'll continue to make sure that these investments count for the people of Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I want to thank the minister for his response. I'm pleased to hear about the investments our government is making for those living in my community and our province. These investments will significantly improve the daily lives of commuters, riders and their families.

Over the summer, I was lucky to have a number of opportunities to speak with my constituents about the issues that matter to them. I heard about the need for increased GO service for those travelling from Halton to Toronto. People want more train trips, more bus trips and more comprehensive service. I also heard about the need for more parking for commuters using GO Transit. As a commuter myself, I know first-hand just how important this issue is.

Can the minister please tell members of this House how we can address some of the challenges those in my community are currently facing?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Again, I thank the member for her question. We understand the challenges that those in Halton are facing, whether it be the need for increased GO service or for additional parking. We have identified the potential for an additional 600 to 800 spaces at the Milton GO station and we're currently undertaking feasibility studies to determine how these might be accommodated. These are concrete steps.

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I also certainly look forward to being in Milton later this evening with the member from that community at a town hall meeting. This will give me the opportunity to hear from residents about the concerns they have on a wide variety of transportation issues.

But more than anything else, I am extremely proud to serve alongside this member, and all members on this side of the House, because we understand the importance of building the province up. The members opposite from both opposition parties could take a page out of our book when it comes to making hard decisions to invest in building this province up.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Acting Premier. All along, this government has been spinning a tale that the sale of Hydro One would bring in \$9 billion of new money. Today's report from the Financial Accountability Officer puts a stop to that government spin. Mr. LeClair confirmed that \$2.2 billion of that \$9-billion figure is not new money.

How can the government be so short-sighted? At best, they're going to get a temporary boost of \$1 billion to \$2 billion, but they're losing an asset that produces \$700 million a year in revenue for years going on.

Mr. Speaker, will the Acting Premier finally admit that they have not been giving the people of Ontario the straight goods on this bad fire sale?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, the Financial Accountability Officer today affirms our valuation of Hydro One. We are on track to realizing our \$9-billion target through the broadening of ownership of Hydro One.

But I really think it's important that we look at the lessons we learned from the mistakes you made when you were in government, particularly with regard to the 407 lease. The government of the day did not implement any regulations for price-setting, for example. In fact, Hydro One does not set its own rates. It will continue to be set by the independent Ontario Energy Board, and we will introduce legislation to strengthen the regulatory oversight authority of the Ontario Energy Board to protect ratepayers.

The province does not receive any ongoing direct financial benefit from the 407 lease. In contrast, with Hydro One, the province does continue to receive revenue from Hydro One.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Acting Premier: Dodge, deflect, deny. How many governments in the past can you blame? Are you going to go back to Mitch Hepburn and John Robarts? Can we just try to stick to this decade?

This government has known all along that the most they could get was limited new money on the fire sale of Hydro One. When you deduct the \$5 billion that this government committed to putting towards hydro debt, it only leaves \$1.4 billion in new money. It makes no sense to sell an asset that will only net \$1.4 billion while you lose an asset that brings in \$700 million each and every year.

Will the Acting Premier stop this madness and put an immediate stop to the sale of Hydro One? If there is ever a day to stop; if there is ever a day to pause and recognize, given the facts, that this is not in the best interests of Ontario—do the right thing. Stop the fire sale.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We talk about transparency. We recognize and remember that when this government came into power, there was a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit that they hid from accountability. We are going to ensure that that never happens again. We work closely with the Financial Accountability Officer—

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Furthermore, as we put forward legislation to protect the interests of the public by being more open—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Leeds-Grenville, second time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So we've taken those steps. In fact, we've brought forward the Financial Accountability Officer to provide information prior to these assessments. One thing is critically important that the opposition never talks about, and that's the fact that we are going to retain 85% ownership of this company after the first tranche. We'll assess effectively what that means going forward.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. This morning's FAO report shows that the sell-off of Hydro One is a bad deal for Ontario businesses, but this Liberal government continues to ignore that. In fact, Speaker, if they were listening, they would have heard that Ontario businesses cite soaring electricity costs as the number one factor hurting business competitiveness. This government sell-off won't even ensure relief from the debt retirement charge for these businesses, and, on top of that, businesses are going to lose the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit.

Will the Acting Premier finally listen to the people of this province and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There's a myth that the third party is trying to perpetuate across this province, and that myth is that Hydro One sets its own rates. In fact, the truth is, Hydro One does not and will not set its own rates. Anyone who is drawing the link between the broadening of the ownership of Hydro One and increased rates is simply trying to create—I'm being careful, Speaker, in the choice of my words—they are creating a myth that actually is false. The OEB sets the rates for utilities. The OEB sets the rates now; the OEB will set the rates in the future. As Hydro One becomes a stronger, better company, that will actually reduce the upward pressure on rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: We already know that because of the rising cost of electricity, nearly 40% of Ontario businesses will delay or cancel investment in the province. This morning's report confirms that businesses will continue to face increasing expenses because of this government's reckless and short-sighted decision to sell off Hydro One.

Business competitiveness is hurting in this province. Will the Acting Premier finally do something about this and stop the sale of Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that anyone who does business in this province will tell us that investment in infrastructure is one of the most important things we can do to improve our productivity. What the revenue from Hydro One will allow us to do is build the infrastructure that is desperately needed.

There is a real cost to not investing in infrastructure. As I said earlier, for every \$100 million invested in public infrastructure, there's an increase in real GDP of \$114 million. So, Speaker, we're making investments. We're taking some assets and putting them into other assets that will yield an important return on investment fiscally and also significantly improve the quality of life of people who are asking for improvements in our infrastructure.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Last year, students from across Ontario participated in the Ministry of Labour's "It's Your Job" video contest. In fact, Pranay Noel and Martin Czachor, two students from St. Francis Xavier Catholic Secondary School in my riding, won first prize for their video on workplace safety. They worked hard and dedicated their time to plan, film and direct their video, and learned a great deal about workplace safety.

Contests like this one are a great way to engage our students and empower them to learn about workplace hazards and safety. This year, I hope that even more students participate in this contest. Mr. Speaker, can the minister provide more information so that students can start preparing for this year's contest?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that very important question about engaging young people in health and safety.

I was able to visit St. Francis last year and personally congratulate Pranay and Martin. I want to congratulate all of the winners from last year and all those students who took time to create the videos.

I would also like to mention that our second-place winners, who came from Trenton High School in the member from Northumberland–Quinte West's riding, went on to win first place in the all-Canada national contest.

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You can still see these videos on the website at the Ministry of Labour. They're really well done. I'm really impressed by the quality of the videos and the knowledge and awareness that students demonstrated about workplace safety.

I'm happy to announce today that the student video contest is taking place all over again this year. I'd ask all members of this House to encourage students in their own ridings to participate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Thank you, Minister. I'm happy to hear that the Ministry of Labour continues to emphasize the importance of our students learning about workplace health and safety. Young workers need to know that they are protected against workplace health and safety hazards now and even after school.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Ministry of Labour is always looking to promote workplace health and safety. How is this ministry working with people after they leave

school to ensure that they understand health and safety in the workplace?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks again to the member for that great question. I'd ask all members of the House to assist me in getting the message out to young people, because we must ensure that Ontarians, including our young workers, know that they've got rights to protect them against workplace health and safety hazards. It's an important part of our job at the Ministry of Labour. Last July, we made basic health and safety awareness training mandatory in this province for all workers and for all supervisors.

Last night, I was really proud to attend the fifth annual Canada's Safest Employers Awards gala in Toronto. It recognizes those companies, from right across Canada, that have outstanding accomplishments in promoting the health and safety of our workers.

I really want to say that if we start with the young people, we end up with results like this. I was happy to see so many Ontario workplaces, such as the Sault Area Hospital and the Residence Inn by Marriott Downtown London, take home gold awards, last night, in safety.

We can all learn at a young age, continue it on, and get health and safety results that all Ontarians can be proud of.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Education. Former Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara appeared on *The Agenda* with Steve Paikin this week. When asked about the millions of dollars that this government promised to the teachers' unions, he said, "The way it was done, it doesn't feel good, it doesn't look good and there is a better way of doing it." Mr. Sorbara suggested that a better way would be to say, "Let's put our expenses before an independent third party and that independent third party will come up with a number, and it will be transparent, open."

Is the minister prepared to take her former colleague's advice and designate a third party to review this apparent misappropriation of education tax dollars?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I've heard this a couple of times. I'm just going to make a comment on it. The use of some words could imply something different. I would caution the member to make sure that she stays on the other side of the withdrawal issue.

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: First off, I think it's important to understand that we have said repeatedly that because negotiations are ongoing, we will not discuss the details of contracts. In fact, the mediator has actually imposed a blackout on the discussions that are going on this week.

The reason that I mention this is because we have always said that we would be quite happy to explain the net-zero construct in the collective agreements, once we have finished the negotiations. The payments in question

are part of the net-zero construct, and I remain committed to that.

However, with respect to accountability, as both the Premier and I said yesterday, the money has not—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again, we're hearing new spin—this is a new one—and we've been hearing it about the OPP investigations. We're often being told, "It's ongoing investigations, so we can't comment." Now, we're hearing that it's ongoing negotiations, so they can't comment.

We know that net zero means the money came from somewhere, and that money is coming from the classrooms. The public works long hours to make the money they contribute to government revenue. They deserve assurances that their education tax dollars go to direct education costs. They expect teacher union dues to cover the cost of negotiations as much as possible, and should the education ministry need to cover any costs, that receipts will be submitted.

Former finance minister Sorbara seems to agree when he said, "Put it in front of a third party. Get the receipts in there so that one can report fully on what happened."

Is the minister going to show us the receipts for all expenses not already covered by the ministry?

Hon. Liz Sandals: As the Premier said yesterday, as I said yesterday, the money has not flowed. There will be an accountability process, as I explained yesterday. There will be a schedule of allowable expenditure areas and we will be verifying that. In fact, we are going to go through an accountability and verification process.

But I repeat: This was part of net zero. We have already said repeatedly that as part of that net-zero construct, we actually do have offsets in terms of early discount retirement gratuity payouts, reductions in sick leave usage, more efficient delivery of professional development, and we will discuss that more fully when bargaining is complete and the blackout period is over.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: With today's shocking revelations through the report from the FAO that the fire sale of Hydro One—

Interjection: Who is the question to?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To the Acting Premier. Thank you very much.

With today's shocking revelation through the report from the FAO that the fire sale of Hydro One will only net \$1.4 billion for government coffers for infrastructure planning going forward, will you do the right thing? Will you listen to the report of the FAO? Will you reverse the decision to sell Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I guess my question to the member opposite is will you read the report of the FAO, because he actually says that we're on track to achieve the \$9 billion in revenue. I know there is a narrative that they are trying to drive, and I think it's really important that the public in Ontario understands that this

is a decision that allows us to build important infrastructure across this province.

The FAO did his job, did a report, but it's incumbent upon every member of this Legislature to actually understand what he said and not misconstrue the findings of the FAO.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my sister Danielle Gélinas and her husband, John Eydt, who just made it to catch the end of question period. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please. It is the last day for somebody who has been sitting in here for a long time. Richard Brennan from the Star is leaving. I think maybe we should say goodbye to him.

Being from Brantford, I would hope I would get one good line out of the guy out of these years.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A point of order: We're very pleased today that the page captain Sebastian Lingertat is from Peterborough, and in the members' east gallery he's joined by his grandfather Dr. James VanLeeuwen, his grandmother Irene VanLeeuwen and his aunt Annette VanLeeuwen. We certainly welcome them to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, on a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I missed it earlier. I just wanted to say that page Abby Moreside's grandmother is in the gallery, and we'd like to welcome Gerda Stefan here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1:00 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased this afternoon to welcome some of my guests who are here today: Scarborough author Barbara Dickson; her husband, David Dickson; Stan MacDonald, better known as the father of one of the "Bomb Boys"; Brenda Hodgson, who's a friend of Barbara; as well as Emilie Heron. Welcome to Queen's Park.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVAN WELLWOOD

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, traditionally Speakers don't give members' statements, so I just wanted to share this story with you today in the Legislature. I know that the Speaker, yourself, is incredibly proud of your riding of Brant and of course of all of the communities that you represent.

When it comes to the town of St. George, you can understand why he is so proud. Evan Wellwood has been battling brain cancer most of his life. At the suggestion of doctors, his family set out to celebrate Christmas in October. Before long, the whole community and the world took notice. Evan's family set up a page to raise funds, called One Last Christmas. It had a target of \$1,500. They raised more than \$44,000. Two months before Christmas, hundreds of homes were fully decorated in the little town of St. George. Shopkeepers and residents began stringing lights, wrapping presents and unrolling fake snow on Evan's lawn. Carollers started going door to door.

On Friday, Evan was made an honorary officer by the Brantford police, complete with a badge and uniform. Evan had always wanted to be a police officer.

On Saturday, about 7,000 people joined the celebrations. That's more than double the town's population. More than 25 floats made their way along Evan's street, and the thousands on hand cheered and waved as he rode by on Santa's sleigh. Batman, the Grinch and Evan's favourite character, SpongeBob, also showed up to wish him a merry Christmas.

Speaker, the outpouring of love and support for Evan and his family by the people of St. George represents the best of Ontario and the best of humanity. From all of us here at the Ontario Legislature, merry Christmas, Evan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You can take all the time you want.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Vanthof: High hydro rates are one of the most important issues for my folks at home. In northern Ontario, we have people who have to choose between how much they eat and how much they heat. We have very severe weather conditions. Actually, there are lots of nights now where we're below zero already. A lot of people burn wood, but as you get older, you can't burn wood. These people are concerned.

Today, we've had the report from the Financial Accountability Officer. His role is to take an impartial view of government plans and give an impartial opinion. There has been lots of debate this morning about that opinion, but the basic fact of the matter is—I'd like my folks at home to know—that if Hydro One is sold, the likely income will be \$1.5 billion that can be used by the government. But the loss, because Hydro One brings dividends to the government, will be maybe \$500 million a year. So by year four, it will be a net loss to the province, a loss that could be used to help people face their hydro bills or a loss that could be used to build the infrastructure they keep talking about.

My question to the finance minister is: Can he add?

TURKISH REPUBLIC DAY

Mr. Mike Colle: Today, we're joined by leaders of the Ontario Turkish community as they raise the Turkish

flag here at the Legislature. I would like to welcome them here today.

Today, October 29, marks the creation of the Turkish republic in 1923. It is Turkish Republic Day today. After Turkey's victory in the war of independence, the Turkish Parliament proclaimed the new Turkish state as a republic. A new constitution, which the Parliament adopted on October 29, 1923, replaced the constitution of the Ottoman Empire. The leader in the Turkish war of independence, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, became the country's first president on the same day.

Following the founding of the Republic of Turkey, Atatürk embarked on a wide-ranging set of unprecedented reforms in the political, economic and cultural aspects of Turkish society. These reforms have left a lasting legacy of which the peoples of Turkish heritage are proud: the transformation of the newly founded republic into today's modern, democratic and secular Turkish state. Turkish women in particular gained many civil rights from these reforms, such as voting rights and the ability to practise many occupations and hold political posts.

There are approximately 25,000 Turkish Ontarians who will be celebrating this important day. To celebrate, many people go to local stadiums to watch performances dedicated to this important day. Such performances usually consist of theatre sketches, poetry readings and traditional Turkish dances. Many schoolchildren participate in these performances. Many people lay wreaths to Atatürk, the great founder of Turkey, or visit Atatürk's mausoleum in the country's capital, Ankara.

Happy Turkish Republic Day and long live Canadian Turkish friendship.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It seems very appropriate for me to share this statement today. On October 6, the town of Caledon passed a resolution that stated:

"Whereas the public electricity system in Ontario is a critical asset to the economy and vital to the living standard and well-being of all Ontarians; and

"Whereas it is essential that Ontarians maintain public control and public decision-making with respect to electricity; and

"Whereas experience in other jurisdictions shows that privatization typically means consumers pay more for electricity; and

"Whereas a privatized Hydro One will no longer be subject to scrutiny by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Financial Accountability Officer or the Integrity Commissioner, and will no longer be required to provide information or services to citizens under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, or the French Language Services Act; and

"Whereas the sale of shares in Hydro One will provide a short-term financial gain for the province in exchange for a much larger long-term financial loss; and

"Whereas the provincial government has no mandate from voters to sell any part of Hydro One,

"Therefore be it resolved that the town of Caledon call on the provincial government to halt the sale of any part of Hydro One, and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians and to respect the autonomy and local decision-making powers of local distribution companies by not forcing these companies into mergers or sales...."

Speaker, the government needs to finally listen to the concerns, like those of the town of Caledon and the Financial Accountability Officer, regarding the Hydro One sell-off.

HATE CRIMES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I rise today to raise some concerns from my constituents, many of whom have strong ties to Punjab. In Punjab, there was a desecration of the Guru Granth Sahib. This constitutes the embodiments of all the Sikh spiritual teachings. This desecration occurred, and it represents, essentially, a hate crime against an already marginalized Sikh community.

Peaceful protesters organized in defiance of this hate crime and called on the government to take action against the perpetrators of this desecration, this hate crime. In response, the state didn't respond and actually assist the protesters. Instead, the state attacked peaceful protesters, two of whom were killed, many of whom were arrested, simply for raising their concerns.

Hate crimes against any community, anywhere in the world, have no place in our society, and I stand with those who have called on the government for justice.

In addition, constituents have raised concerns about the independent decision-making of the leadership of Sikh institutions in relation to these events. Maintaining the sovereignty of Sikh institutions is vitally important, as Sikh leadership in Punjab makes decisions that impact people across the world and, in fact, many residents in my community.

I am encouraged by the movement towards greater accountability for Sikh leadership, and I call on the government to investigate human rights violations against peaceful protesters. As well, I call on the Sikh community to increase their movement toward greater unity in order to maintain the sovereignty of Sikh institutions.

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MANUFACTURING JOBS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: October is Manufacturing Month in Ontario. I'd like to share with you an update on the state of manufacturing in my riding of Kitchener Centre and the greater region of Waterloo. In our province, manufacturing jobs make up about 10% of the workforce. But in my community, it is twice that figure: 20%, or one in five jobs. The head of our Workforce Planning Board, Carol Simpson, tells me that we have 1,840 manufacturing businesses, employing over 54,000 people. Here is an astounding figure: currently there are over 2,000 jobs posted in manufacturing in Waterloo

region. The board, along with Employment Ontario agencies, is working to fill this growing demand in employment.

Without a doubt, my region was hit hard in the last decade by manufacturing job losses. We saw a number of big employers pack up and leave town. But since then, there has been a remarkable recovery. We can look to innovators and our government's Southwestern Ontario Development Fund. Some of these success stories include Ontario Drive and Gear, Ball Service Group, DC Foods, Christie Digital, Colonial Cookies, Conestoga Meat Packers, Toyota, COM DEV, BlackBerry and ATS. It's a very long list.

Manufacturing is alive and well in Waterloo region, and I salute all of the people who are supporting this very vibrant sector.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Michael Harris: For three days now, elementary students in my riding have joined together to protest the impacts of this government's inability to come to an agreement with their teachers. Hundreds of students at about a dozen public schools stayed out of classes to raise their voices against the loss of "after-school clubs and sports" like volleyball, "field trips, and report cards, while teachers withdraw services to press for a new contract." As the Waterloo Region Record reports today, "Students sat in hallways or lunch rooms or gymnasiums. Some made placards, taped to lockers or placed on floors."

Yesterday at Doon Public School in Kitchener, students walked out of class immediately after announcements and paced the halls before heading into the gym, where they continued their peaceful protest throughout the day while teachers remained in their classrooms. As students protesting in the halls of Forest Glen school wrote to me yesterday, "We don't want, we need our extracurriculars," noting that "some kids feel they don't belong, but with extracurriculars they feel they finally fit in," and adding, "It's not fair that you use our extracurriculars to bargain with teachers ... we are important."

That, they are, Speaker, and more than that, they are our future. I think it is incumbent on this government to end this waiting game. Allow our students to enjoy the full educational experience, including extracurriculars that they deserve and that the Ontario taxpayers have paid for.

DURHAM FARM CONNECTIONS

Mr. Granville Anderson: The fall harvest season has given me plenty of opportunities this year to talk about the great farming community in Durham, but I'm going to tell the House one more time, and I will continue to tell the House, about the hard-working and innovative farmers in our community.

Tonight marks the second annual Durham Farm Connections' Celebrate Agriculture Gala, with the goal of supporting agricultural awareness in Durham region. Of course, I spoke just a few weeks ago in favour of the

motion from the member for Huron-Bruce with much the same goal, so I am looking forward to talking more about it this evening.

Durham's agricultural community will come together to discuss strategies and about how the season went, and to honour community members with awards for farm family, spirit of agriculture, and leadership. We will focus on sustainability, innovation and spreading the message of stewardship and our agriculturally driven local economy to everyone in Durham. I am looking forward to this evening.

GECO MUNITIONS FACTORY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize October as Women's History Month in Canada, and also to recognize a group of trail-blazing women who make extraordinary contributions to the Allied victory in the Second World War.

Most Ontarians are unaware that during the Second World War the Canadian government built the General Engineering Company—known as GECO—munitions factory. This 346-acre munitions plant was built in Scarborough, which at the time was a rural community, complete with over four kilometres of tunnels and 172 buildings. For four years, the plant was open 24 hours a day, six days a week. Remarkably, this plant was built in five months and employed over 21,000 workers, who were predominantly women. To support the war effort, over 265 million munitions were filled by these women.

Scarborough resident and author Barbara Dickson recently released her book, *Bomb Girls: Trading Aprons for Ammo*. Barbara provides a first-hand account of Canada's largest fuse-filling munitions plant, including technical records, photographic evidence and business documentation. The women who worked at GECO were known as Bomb Girls, risking their lives daily, and they showed great resolve in a time women working outside the home defied cultural norms.

Today in the Legislature, I want to again welcome my guests: Barbara Dickson, her husband, David, as well as Stan MacDonald, whose father was a manager at GECO.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like all of us to recognize the contributions of the brave men and women who worked at GECO and their dedicated efforts to help win the Second World War.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Of course, we welcome our guests and thank you for joining us.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FRANCOPHONE IMMIGRATION IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

Hon. Michael Chan: Speaker, once in a while someone will ask me the following question: "Parlez-vous français?" Regrettably, my answer is no.

Having said that, I do want to inform you, Speaker, that in the House here we have one individual who is very passionate and very committed in terms of promoting the French culture, French language and French heritage. She is, of course, our minister responsible for francophone affairs, Minister Meilleur.

Speaker, I rise today to remind my colleagues that next week, November 1 through 7, is National Franco-phone Immigration Week. Célébrons ensemble. This will be the third annual celebration of the contributions made by francophone immigrants to the health and vitality of so many communities in this country. It's also a celebration of the communities themselves and the tremendous work they do in attracting and welcoming these newcomers.

Here in Ontario, we have good reason to join in this national celebration. Our province has had a rich French-language tradition for more than 400 years. Today, francophones make up 4.8% of our population. That's more than 600,000 Ontarians, and we are fortunate that this number continues to increase.

Outside Quebec, we are the leading destination in Canada for French-speaking immigrants. Currently, francophones make up approximately 2% of immigrants to Ontario. As I'm sure this House is aware, our government's immigration strategy has set a target of 5% francophone immigration, and we are determined to reach that goal.

This is why, two years ago, we launched a dedicated francophone municipal immigration web portal to help our municipalities with francophone communities attract more skilled French-speaking immigrants to grow those communities.

It is why earlier this year, we launched the French-speaking skilled worker stream under the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program to attract French-speaking skilled workers who want to live and work permanently in Ontario. It's why we have doubled the number of francophone service providers to help settle francophone newcomers.

Finally, reaching that 5% goal is why we have assembled the group of experts on francophone immigration. These 11 people come from different sectors, regions and areas of expertise. What they bring to the table, together, is an understanding of immigration, community building and the francophone experience in Ontario. They are currently looking into how best to promote, recruit, welcome and retain francophone immigrants in Ontario. This group of experts will be delivering their advice by next spring on how to achieve our 5% target.

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Speaker, our francophone communities help make our province the magnificent, diverse, vibrant place that it is today. We are committed to preserving and growing these communities. They are a big part of Ontario's glorious past and a big part of our brighter future. Thank you. Merci beaucoup, Speaker.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. It's now time for responses.

M^{me} Gila Martow: Monsieur le Président, je suis heureuse de prendre la parole sur l'immigration francophone en Ontario. Il est important de reconnaître les contributions que les immigrants francophones apportent à notre province alors que nous célébrons la troisième Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone, du 1^{er} au 7 novembre, sous le thème de cette année : Une diversité qui nous unit ! »

Comme beaucoup d'entre nous ici, je suis une enfant d'immigrants. Mon père est né en Pologne, et il est arrivé à Montréal quand il avait cinq ans. À ce moment, il ne parlait seulement que le yiddish. Il a rapidement appris l'anglais, et comme un adulte qui travaillait pour le gouvernement fédéral comme météorologue, il était déterminé à maîtriser le français. Depuis que le gouvernement fédéral a offert un enseignement gratuit, il se consacre à la tâche et a encouragé ses enfants à maîtriser le français aussi.

Bien sûr, l'apprentissage et la conservation de la maîtrise de la langue française est une question assez simple si vous vivez au Québec comme je l'ai fait jusqu'à la fin des années 1980. Les nouveaux immigrants au Québec s'attendent à communiquer en français.

En Ontario, les communautés francophones veulent également voir la maîtrise de la langue française se poursuivre pour des générations à venir. Par contre, elles sont concernées quand il y a seulement une très petite partie des immigrants en Ontario qui sont en mesure de converser en français.

C'est pour cette raison que les communautés francophones ont encouragé le gouvernement de l'Ontario à s'engager à un objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone. Ceci est un enjeu et, plus spécifiquement, à la réponse du gouvernement, qui a consenti au principe de se doter d'un comité composé de la communauté et d'experts gouvernementaux et autres pour élaborer une véritable stratégie afin d'obtenir ce 5 % d'immigration francophone dans la province. Pour aller avec cela, il ne faut pas oublier également d'obtenir une stratégie pour établir comment, une fois que les gens sont rendus ici, ils seraient pris en charge au niveau de l'accueil, de la formation et de l'intégration dans les communautés où ils choisissent de vivre en Ontario.

Quand je participe à des évènements avec nos communautés francophones, tels que le grand rassemblement francophone de la semaine dernière à Toronto avec l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; la célébration de la journée francophone avec l'AFRY, l'Association des francophones de la région de York, à Markham, le mois dernier; et même la journée de la francophonie, que j'ai animée lors de l'Exposition nationale canadienne à Toronto, je suis convaincue que les nouveaux arrivants francophones sont chaleureusement accueillis et appréciés.

Cependant, il ne suffit pas simplement d'avoir des objectifs arbitraires fixés. Nous devons trouver des

façons de travailler avec les consultants en immigration et avec nos partenaires parlementaires dans les régions francophones pour encourager le tourisme, le commerce et l'immigration.

Je tiens à souligner que l'apprentissage et l'amélioration des compétences linguistiques en français sont soutenus par les nouveaux Canadiens des régions non-francophones, comme le prouve le nombre d'inscriptions dans des écoles d'immersion française. Après tout, les nouveaux arrivants apprécient rapidement que le Canada est un pays bilingue et que la maîtrise du français est un atout précieux.

Dans ma circonscription de Thornhill, le français est souvent entendu parlé par les nouveaux Canadiens en provenance du Maroc et de la France. Beaucoup de Juifs séfarades au centre Kehila de Thornhill me remercient de les saluer en français, tout en me rappelant que beaucoup de gens dans leur communauté parlent également l'espagnol.

Pour terminer, je serais ravie d'apprendre l'espagnol. Par contre, comme porte-parole aux affaires francophones du Parti PC de l'Ontario, je pense que je vais devoir améliorer mon français. Merci beaucoup.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to recognize that there are a few members in our caucus who are Franco-Ontarian and so I would like to thank them for their hard work and representation of this strong community.

My colleague from Nickel Belt is a strong advocate on many health issues, with a deep interest in health services in northern Ontario, where many Franco-Ontarians live.

My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin has been on the front lines of many important issues, including development of the Ring of Fire.

Finally, my colleague from Timmins-James Bay cares deeply for workers' rights and advocacy.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 14% of Franco-Ontarians are born outside Canada. This means that immigration is central and important to the vitality of the French-speaking community of the province. Therefore, our party is pleased with the express 5% target of francophone immigration. But according to the annual report published by the French language commissioner, there is a need for the Ontario government to establish transparent accountability mechanisms for francophone immigration.

There is often little to no awareness of the challenges that francophones may face when they immigrate to Canada. Some believe that Canada is an entirely bilingual country, only to arrive and realize that many services are not offered in their native language.

According to the annual report published by the French language commissioner, when newcomers arrive in the province, they are sometimes referred to English or bilingual settlement services that know little or nothing about francophone communities and institutions. Nineteen stakeholders also point to the uneven nature of services provided by bilingual organizations. New-

comers' unfamiliarity with services available in French or the presence of francophone communities and institutions in their new region is often cited as a challenge.

Mr. Speaker, French Canadians make up a large percentage of our population here in Ontario and across the country. Those who identify as French Canadian, French, Québécois and Acadian make up 11.9 million people, or 33.78% of the Canadian population. From the arts and entrepreneurship to education and politics, we are so fortunate to have such engaged Ontarians of French heritage, vital to the fabric of our province and our country.

But as I stated before, there is work to be done in order to support French-speaking people with their needs and to incorporate them into our immensely diverse and multicultural society. There are many organizations across the province that work towards the well-being and the representation of Franco-Canadians. Young people need to understand their culture, heritage and language, so I am so proud of organizations such as the Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien, la Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, et l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario, which all do outstanding work on behalf of and for the young francophone community in our province.

In my riding of London-Fanshawe, there is a strong Franco-Ontarian community and I am proud that we have three French schools in the city. These schools are: École élémentaire Marie-Curie, Académie de la Tamise and École secondaire Gabriel-Dumont. I am also very excited for the new school that will be opening its doors in September 2016.

Building stronger and more acceptable francophone communities should be a part of this government's plans, but I am proud of our current active and vibrant Franco-Ontarian community here and in London.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the minister today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. Merci beaucoup.

It is now time for petitions.

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PETITIONS

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: "Planning for Ontario's future.
To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

"Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

"Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

“Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians.”

I agree with this, and I will affix my signature to it and give it to page Michael.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

“Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water.

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I am pleased to sign and to support this petition and to send it down with page Julia.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M^{me} Cristina Martins: J'ai une pétition ici qui est dirigée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l'eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu'elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d'eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu'à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d'alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l'Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l'Ontario pour qu'il interdise la création et l'ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l'Environnement d'effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je suis d'accord avec cette pétition. Je vais y affixer mon nom et je l'envoie à la table avec Vanessa.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature and provide it to page Victoria.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Blessed Cardinal Newman Catholic secondary school continues to inspire students to succeed by developing programs which integrate Catholic values and teachings into the curriculum. Innovation is a part of the tradition at Newman; the school continues to thrive because of its tradition of providing a caring educational, social and spiritual environment for its students.

“Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman facility, located at 100 Brimley South, cannot accommodate the current and projected future student population;

"Whereas Blessed Cardinal Newman is Toronto Catholic District School Board's number one capital priority needs project;

"Whereas the current lease agreement with the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp. will expire in 2018 and will require a more effective long-term solution for the current and future students attending Blessed Cardinal Newman;

"Whereas ministry inspections in 2013 indicated that 70% of the building is in need of repair, requiring replacements to major components of the facility;

"Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman site houses 20 portables and cannot accommodate more due to constrained site size;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education provide funding for a 1,100 replacement facility to more effectively serve the current and future Blessed Cardinal Newman student population."

I affix my name to this petition and give it to page John.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

"Whereas once you privatize hydro, there's no return; and

"We'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"We'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"We'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I sign this petition and give it to page Abby.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present this petition that has been signed by hundreds of folks from my area, from Windsor and Essex county, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas wait times are rising to 80+ days for an MRI in southwestern Ontario;

"Whereas experienced and qualified technologists are available to fill positions in this field, but lack of funding to hospitals only allows limited hours of operation;

"Whereas by allowing independent health facilities the licence to have MRI as an added modality, it would drastically cut wait times and create much-needed jobs;

"Whereas as a new open MRI would accommodate more patients with claustrophobia and larger size and keep tax dollars in our community;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Decrease MRI wait times and create jobs by increasing the funding for MRI services and implement a plan to allow MRI as a modality in independent health facilities in southwestern Ontario."

I appreciate this petition, and I'll send it to the Clerks' table via page John.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have another page fully signed with signatures, similar to the last petition. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman facility, located at 100 Brimley South, cannot accommodate the current and projected future student population;

"Whereas Blessed Cardinal Newman is Toronto Catholic District School Board's number one capital priority needs project;

"Whereas the current lease agreement with the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp. will expire in 2018 and will require a more effective long-term solution for the current and future students attending Blessed Cardinal Newman;

"Whereas ministry inspections in 2013 indicated that 70% of the building is in need of repair, requiring replacements to major components of the facility;

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"Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman site houses 20 portables and cannot accommodate more due to constrained site size;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Education provide funding for a 1,100 replacement facility to more effectively serve the current and future Blessed Cardinal Newman student population."

I'm going to affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Nicole.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas repeated cuts to health care funding under the present government are having a negative impact on the residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, including seniors, diabetics and those suffering from eye or cardiovascular conditions; and

"Whereas the heart rehabilitation program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre provided a valuable service for many residents; and

"Whereas it is in everyone's interest to help all Ontarians stay healthy and prevent the occurrence of acute and dangerous conditions, such as heart failure; and

“Whereas this interest is best served through adequate funding to programs that have proven their value;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take all necessary actions to restore the heart rehab program at the Seaway Valley Health Centre.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to page Samuel.

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas mental illness affects people of all ages, educational and income levels, and cultures; and

“Whereas one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and only one third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them; and

“Whereas mental illness is the second leading cause of human disability and premature death in Canada; and

“Whereas the cost of mental health and addictions to the Ontario economy is \$34 billion; and

“Whereas the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions made 22 recommendations in their final report; and

“Whereas the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, seeks to implement all 22 of these recommendations;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Improving Mental Health and Addictions Services in Ontario Act, 2015, which:

“(1) Brings all mental health services in the province under one ministry, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

“(2) Establishes a single body to design, manage and coordinate all mental health and addictions systems throughout the province;

“(3) Ensures that programs and services are delivered consistently and comprehensively across Ontario;

“(4) Grants the Ombudsman full powers to audit or investigate providers of mental health and addictions services in Ontario.”

I fully agree with this petition, sign my signature, and give it to Abby to deliver.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Three is the lucky charm. I have another petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Blessed Cardinal Newman Catholic secondary school continues to inspire students to succeed by developing programs which integrate Catholic values and teachings into the curriculum. Innovation is a part of the tradition at Newman; the school continues to thrive because of its

tradition of providing a caring educational, social and spiritual environment for its students.

“Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman facility, located at 100 Brimley South, cannot accommodate the current and projected future student population;

“Whereas Blessed Cardinal Newman is Toronto Catholic District School Board’s number one capital priority needs project;

“Whereas the current lease agreement with the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp. will expire in 2018 and will require a more effective long-term solution for the current and future students attending Blessed Cardinal Newman;

“Whereas ministry inspections in 2013 indicated that 70% of the building is in need of repair, requiring replacements to major components of the facility;

“Whereas the current Blessed Cardinal Newman site houses 20 portables and cannot accommodate more due to constrained site size;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ministry of Education provide funding for a 1,100 replacement facility to more effectively serve the current and future Blessed Cardinal Newman student population.”

I agree with this petition, I affix my signature and give it to page Julia.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Winchester District Memorial Hospital provides essential health services to the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and was awarded ‘accreditation with exemplary standing’—the highest award by Accreditation Canada earlier this year; and

“Whereas the projected increase in Ontario’s senior population demands that facilities have the resources and capacity required to accommodate increasing demand; and

“Whereas Ontarians cherish access to high-quality local health care; and

“Whereas the recent closure of 14 beds at the WDMH and the loss of over nine full-time skilled staff positions at a time when Ontario has experienced unemployment above the national average for over seven consecutive years are the result of ongoing silent funding cuts that are threatening our cherished health care system;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately reinstate adequate funding levels for the Winchester District Memorial Hospital that would allow the reopening of local beds and the rehiring of local qualified front-line health staff.”

I agree with this and will be passing it to page Sam.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT (MEETINGS
OF SHAREHOLDERS AND EXECUTIVE
COMPENSATION), 2015
LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS
(ASSEMBLÉES DES ACTIONNAIRES
ET RÉTRIBUTION DES MEMBRES
DE LA DIRECTION)

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 128, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act with respect to meetings of shareholders and the adoption of an executive compensation policy / Projet de loi 128, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions en ce qui concerne les assemblées des actionnaires et l'adoption d'une politique relative à la rétribution des membres de la direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Mississauga—Erindale.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, investors take incredible risks to invest their hard-earned money in shares of public and private corporations. Shareholders are the real owners of these companies. Their share ownership in these companies provides them with one key, fundamental right, and that is to elect directors to provide leadership to the companies on their behalf.

However, Mr. Speaker, the current provisions of the Ontario Business Corporations Act are not very clear and/or are being misused as far as the nomination process and voting for the election of directors are concerned. As a result, the shareholders end up compromising the very basic and fundamental right and ability to elect directors. We need a major overhaul of our current and outdated system and relevant rules and regulations.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the editorial of the July 16 edition of the *Globe and Mail* this year:

“When we think of elections where voters have no choice and the winners are predetermined, we think of repressive dictatorship and not modern democratic Canada.”

Yet directors of Canadian companies come to office after ‘elections’ that take place under rules designed to fix the results. Shareholders are given the choice to either vote in favour of candidates put forward by the company—a roster that exactly matches the number of available seats—or to ‘withhold’ their votes. There is no way to vote against a director. At the extreme, it means a director can be elected if only one shareholder—say, the director himself—votes in favour, even if everyone else withholds their votes. So much for shareholder democracy.

“This voting process is not the product of some nefarious corporate manipulation. It is the system laid out in Canada’s federal and provincial business statutes. They are in sore need of a major overhaul.”

Mr. Speaker, it is clear from the editorial, as well as from our own research, that there are two fundamental issues: Number one is why shareholders have no role in nominating directors, and number two is why shareholders are not given the opportunity to vote against the directors being nominated. Let me discuss each of these issues.

Normally, the governance committee or nomination committee of the board is assigned the task of selecting candidates to be nominated at the annual general meeting of the shareholders. Shareholders are normally not represented on these committees and, as a result, have no input in nominating director candidates. The nominating committee usually recommends candidates who are either known to directors or to senior management.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, under the current rules, the chair of the board normally chairs the meeting of the shareholders. This poses a significant problem when the shareholders try to propose a nominee for the director’s position or try to add a new item for consideration at the meeting. These items are generally overruled, based on technicalities, by the chair. This makes it hard for shareholders to raise their issues and concerns at their own meetings.

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Mr. Speaker, as you can see, currently the shareholders normally can only vote for directors who are being nominated by the nomination committee. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the shareholders to make meaningful input to this process.

This gets even worse. Under the current system, the shareholders are asked to vote either in favour or to withhold votes when voting on electing directors. Withholding votes are not considered votes against any particular director nominee. As a result, even when the majority of the votes being withheld are far greater than the votes cast in favour of any particular director nominee, the nominee still gets elected. In essence, the director nominee can just get elected with one vote, even if all the other shareholders withheld votes for that director.

Mr. Speaker, let me just give you an example. Can you imagine a process where, during our provincial election, each of us gives our constituents the option that they can either vote for you or they can withhold their vote, but they have no choice given to them to vote against you? This will mean that everyone in this House will get elected every time, as long as we choose to serve. This is exactly the current situation with the election of directors in corporations.

To counter this measure, some corporations have adopted a majority voting policy. What this really means is, that if the votes withheld for a director nominee are more than in favour of the director, the director is expected to resign. Again, the decision to accept or reject

the resignation is made by the same board who recommends the director nominee in the first place. Normally, these resignations are rejected, again overriding the will of the shareholders.

This definitely raises the question: What recourse is available to the shareholders under the current legislation, if they're unhappy with the election, selection and/or leadership direction of the directors? This leaves the shareholder with only one option; that is, to call a special meeting of the shareholders, if they're unhappy with the current directors. However, the threshold for calling this special meeting is currently set at 5% in the legislation, which is not normally easy to achieve in a public company.

In addition, the current legislation also requires that the shareholder must be a registered shareholder with the corporation to be eligible to call the special meeting of the shareholders. In this day and age, when the majority of the shares are either bought through brokers or purchased online, the shares often are not registered in the name of a beneficial shareholder. This creates a serious problem and a key hindrance to calling a special meeting of the shareholders, as the shareholders' meeting can only be requisitioned by registered shareholders.

The amendments being proposed in this legislation will lower the current ownership threshold required, from 5% to 2%, to call a special meeting of the shareholders. This amendment will definitely provide shareholders the ability to nominate directors of their choice, rather than just accept the nominees being proposed by the directors or the corporation. The amendment will further provide greater certainty that the shareholders can nominate director nominees at the shareholders' meeting.

Mr. Speaker, the other amendment being proposed in this legislation will allow shareholders to elect their own chair to preside over the shareholders' meeting. This will assist the shareholders to speak freely and raise their concerns, as well as provide needed input.

The amendments being proposed to section 97 will ensure that the directors can only be elected if they receive a plurality of the votes cast in their favour and not just by one vote. This amendment will go a long way to respect the wishes of the shareholders.

The proposed amendment to section 105(1) takes into account the current shares-trading practices in the industry. It will provide beneficial owners the same rights as registered owners of the shares.

The proposed amendment to section 110 is really important, as it provides clear direction as to whether the shareholder is voting in favour or against a director nominee. The current practice of withholding votes is very confusing and serves no real purpose to express the wishes of the shareholders. The shareholders need to send a clear message by clearly indicating if they are voting for or against a director nominee.

Mr. Speaker, the same editorial from the *Globe and Mail* further states that Canada's largest shareholder coalition, the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance—normally called CCGG—has lobbied hard for

voting reform, arguing Canada and the United States are outliers in a world where most major countries have allowed shareholders to vote against directors.

This editorial further states: "The CCGG are urging regulators to consider additional changes that will allow large shareholders to propose nominees whose names would be added to the proxy ballot. The question today is not whether majority voting should be legislated—it should be—but why governments aren't going further to strengthen shareholder democracy, and give shareholders a real vote on their board of representatives." This says it all.

As I said at the very outset, the shareholders are the owners of the companies in which they invest. The amendments being proposed in this legislation, if passed, will enhance shareholders' fundamental rights.

I want to touch on another issue. The other issue that has recently received major attention is the ability of the directors to approve unreasonable compensation packages for the senior management and directors at the expense of the shareholders. Recently, this issue has made headlines in Canadian newspapers when the CEOs have been paid huge bonuses even though the company and/or the industry was not doing well. This forced the directors to retract the approved bonuses.

The proposed amendment to section 137 would require remuneration of the directors and officers of the corporation to be in accordance with the executive compensation policy approved by the shareholders.

The proposed amendment to section 169.1 would allow a registered holder of shares or beneficial owners of shares who are entitled to vote to make proposals to adopt, amend or repeal an executive compensation policy. The amendment proposed will help increase the accountability, transparency and performance linkage of executive pay. This proposed change will put pressure on the boards to follow compensation policies and the better alignment of pay to company performance.

In February 2015, the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services invited a volunteer panel of experts in corporate and commercial law to develop recommendations and reform priorities to over 20 pieces of legislation. The recommendations made by this panel included reviewing and updating the Business Corporations Act. Some of the proposed recommendations by the panel are in line with amendments being proposed in this legislation today, such as allowing shareholders to effectively determine the composition of the board of directors by eliminating certain legislative requirements, and determining how best to make available to the ultimate investors in shares of a corporation the rights and remedies available to the registered holders of these shares.

To conclude, the proposed legislation would help create a meaningful process for receiving shareholders' input on a regular basis regarding the nomination process, the election of directors, executive compensation, as well as making the proxy method far more transparent to enable shareholders to express their wishes and desires.

These measures will assist in making boards more accountable and ultimately strengthen shareholder democracy.

Mr. Speaker, as always, I'm open to any and all constructive suggestions from my colleagues to make this bill more effective and ensure that companies are well managed and accountable to their shareholders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I did listen intently to the member when he put forward his recommendation, and he used some very strong language, like “nefarious” and “dictatorship” and basically it sounded like the sky is falling if we keep things as they are in terms of how companies deal with nominations and elections of directors, and how shareholders can be involved and have their voices heard.

I would equate the shareholders, in a way, with taxpayers. The directors of the companies very much operate according to whatever rules of governance are in place and have to follow their own constitution and do things properly.

There is always room for improvement, so I'm happy to hear any specific suggestions of where improvements can be found. But mostly I just heard criticisms about how things are done right now. Concerns were raised but I didn't really hear suggestions of what the member and his government plan to do to make the necessary changes. Certainly I didn't hear a lot of mention of examples here in Ontario of specific companies or specific problems or things that went on. He did mention that in the United States there were huge bonuses given even when companies underperformed or, in his words, didn't do well.

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I would remind the member that we just had the Pan Am Games this summer, and yes, people had a lot of fun, but they didn't exactly show a profit. So in terms of a company, if they were running the games, they wouldn't be considered to be doing very well if they don't show a profit. They kept raising the budget, so it's very easy to reach budget targets when that budget keeps getting raised all the time. If I'm given a budget for something, say a home renovation of \$20,000 to renovate a basement—I guess you can't do it for \$20,000; I guess now it's more like a bathroom. If you're renovating for \$20,000 and somebody says to me, “I'm going to give you a bonus of”—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member if you would speak to the bill that's in front of us, rather than straying off topic.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Okay. I'm trying to draw an analogy, but you can see what I mean, that—

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's a very good analogy—

Mrs. Gila Martow: If I'm a home renovator and I have to get the project done within a certain budget, if that budget gets raised, I don't think I deserve the bonus, is what I'm trying to say.

Last night, we heard an excellent speaker on the Magna Carta and really a lot of his focus—it was very interesting, the member—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member again: I need to see and hear that you're tying this to the bill that's in front of us. So far, I don't see any relationship. If you could quickly do that, I'd appreciate it.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we know, the essence of democracy is about freedom, and that's what the British parliamentary system was built upon. The election of directors, shareholders—it's all part of the parliamentary process, I guess is what I would call it, and if shareholders need to have a say, I think that's very important. I think it's very important for shareholders to be able to have a say in nominating directors.

But I have to be a little bit suspicious and have to wonder what the meaning is of the presentation. If you're talking about addressing the bill, well, I didn't hear the member addressing the bill particularly in his presentation. I just heard a lot of criticism, I heard a lot of concerns being raised by the member. He mentioned dictatorships. Well, the public entrusts all of us here with their valuable taxpayer dollars that they work hard to contribute, just as shareholders contribute to a company with their investments. When shareholders are agitated and concerned about how that investment is going, that's when they come to the government and ask for support to make the changes in how the directors are nominated and elected. That's what they are really concerned about. They are concerned about their investment.

We are talking very much in this House this week and leading up to the last few months even—even since the last election, we've been talking a lot about the sale of Hydro One. My concern is that with changes—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to the member that this is my last warning, and I'll move to the next speaker.

I do object to your criticism that the member did not speak to the bill. I was listening very carefully and he addressed many sections of the bill and made references. If you would do a similar deputation, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from—you've got me there.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No problem; it keeps changing: Niagara West–Glanbrook.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Niagara West–Glanbrook.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I appreciate your point. As we know, Hydro One is going through an IPO process, so there are going to be directors named. There are going to be shareholders, an IPO done of the stock down the road, so I think this is actually very relevant to the debate—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would say to you that's not a point of order, so I would go back to the speaker and remind her of my comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Okay. I appreciate the member for his support.

I'll just wrap up on that, which is what my concern is, that we are very concerned on this side of the House with how the sale of Hydro One will proceed and how the directors will—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Well, this bill will affect—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: She's talking about the future shareholders of Hydro One and how this bill will impact their ability to set compensation—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Are you challenging the Speaker's decision?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, I was explaining what she was talking about, which is 100% relevant to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much. I just want to start off with Hydro.

Laughter.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm just trying to loosen the mood here, Speaker. I'm just trying to help you out. First of all, I'd like to thank the Speaker for allowing me to speak.

The bill we have before us today, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, follows the same path that too many other bills from across the aisle have been following lately. The intent of the bill is good; namely, increasing shareholder participation in board decisions. However, in dealing with this very complex issue, which absolutely—absolutely—deserves our attention, this bill is too simplistic and falls short of achieving its intent.

I certainly agree that we need to be increasing shareholder participation and ensuring that corporate boards are accountable to their shareholders. If someone is willing to invest their money in a company, then they should have a say in how that company is run and how decisions are made.

As it stands right now, there are numerous problems with the system that is currently in place. For example, in the current system most shareholder meetings use a single voting system. This single voting system means that each shareholder with voting rights either votes for something or withholds their vote. The result of this is that in the case of a director election—now, listen to this; I think it's important for all the Liberals to understand this and my Conservative colleagues over here as well—one vote cast for the director would be enough to elect that individual. How many in this room would like to get elected with one vote?

Clearly, this is not an ideal situation, and the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance, which my colleague across spoke about—the voice of shareholders in Canada—has called for a majority voting system to be

put in place. Similarly, a report commissioned by the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, titled Business Law Agenda: Priority Findings and Recommendations Report, also recommended that a majority voting system be used, which probably makes a lot of sense to all of us, although I'm not sure the Liberals got—I'll just leave it at that.

Unfortunately, this is one of the areas where Bill 128 falls short of achieving its goal. Bill 128 falls short in this area because it uses contradictory language when it comes to whether or not a majority voting system should be used. For example, when electing a director to a board, the bill says that majority voting should be used for proxies voting on behalf of shareholders, but for shareholders who are present, the single voting system continues to be in force. How does that make any sense? Why should a shareholder who appoints a proxy be treated differently than one who is able to attend the meeting on his own?

I know that some of this stuff is a little complicated. That's why I'm doing it slowly. What if the shareholder had to appoint a proxy because they are physically unable to attend the meeting? Would this bill then be discriminating against that individual because of their condition?

1410

Hon. Michael Coteau: A little bit slower; I can't understand you.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'm doing that for you, pal. I hope you appreciate it.

These are very important questions—to the member across—that, unfortunately, are created by a lack of clear language around voting procedures in Bill 128.

There are other issues with this bill as well. One of those other issues that I would like to address today is some of the concessions being made to shareholders unnecessarily. Again, I absolutely believe that it is important for us to ensure that shareholders are engaged in the practices of the board. However, in an attempt to engage shareholders, Bill 128 creates a much more difficult and lengthy process for boards.

For example: By extending the number of shareholders who are able to call a meeting, the bill creates a situation where meetings can be called, at a cost to the board, by only a very small percentage of shareholders. Again—and this is important to listen to—the Canadian Coalition for Good Governance recommends that the share percentage cut-off for calling a meeting remain at 5% for public companies with a market value of less than \$1 billion. In the case of larger companies, the Coalition recommends that a 3% threshold be used, to align with US companies.

Mr. Speaker, it surprises me that this government would go out of its way to create a more difficult process for boards than the one that currently exists in the United States. Given how often we hear that raising corporate taxes would hurt our competitiveness and how we need to compete with our neighbours to the south, you would think that we would want to make the process less

difficult, rather than more. I think you would agree with that, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 128, the Business Corporations Amendment Act, covers an important topic and has good intentions. But maybe what they are doing here is a shift for the party opposite. Maybe this shows that they now understand that raising corporate taxes to pay for infrastructure rather than selling off a public asset is the way to go. Maybe, but, Mr. Speaker, I doubt it.

By helping boards, we will ensure more realistic compensation packages, more diversity on corporate boards and more accountability to shareholders. Unfortunately—to the member across—this bill falls short in meeting those intentions because of its contradictory language, its simplistic solutions to complex issues and problems, and its unnecessary measures that no one here seems to be asking for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I want to thank the speaker for staying on the bill.

Before we carry the debate further, I would remind everyone that we're in private members' public business. If you have a concern with the bill, you can always direct a question to the member who spoke first. It's his bill, and he has two minutes at the end to respond. He may answer your question.

Further debate?

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 128, an act to amend the Business Corporations Act. Our government is committed to growing the economy and helping to create good jobs now and into the future. In order to meet our commitments, we must support business and ensure Ontario has modern laws that facilitate an efficient market and a prosperous business climate.

The governing legislation for Ontario business corporations is the Ontario Business Corporations Act. It provides, among other things, incorporation, director and officer responsibilities, shareholder rights, offences and penalties. As with all government legislation, this act should be reviewed and updated when necessary to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of business. That is what my colleague the member from Mississauga—Erindale is proposing with Bill 128.

The first issue I will address is shareholders' involvement in the nomination process of the board of directors. Currently, shareholders have the choice to either vote in favour of the candidates put forward by the company or to withhold their vote, which means they are not counted in the vote tally. The results of this are that a director can be elected to the board even if a majority of shareholders withhold their votes. Advocates of business investors have long been asking for legal changes which would allow shareholders to vote against candidates for seats on the board of directors or otherwise making voting truly democratic.

Current best practices in Canada suggest that nominees for a board of directors should be chosen by an independent nominating committee of the board. The nominee slate, however, often tends to reflect the board's

or, in some instances, the CEO's network of relationships and prospects. Even when prospective candidates are found through the services of an independent search firm, the parameters of the search firm's mandate, as well as the production of their list of recommendations, can be determined by the members of the nominating committee or the CEO.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, David Orazietti, announced that a government-appointed panel of legal experts had tabled a series of reform proposals to modernize Ontario's business legislation. One of these proposals was to allow shareholders to vote no in the election of directors, to make it easier for investors to reject unwanted members of the board. The committee's recommendations have been available for public comment until earlier this month. Now the ministry will review the issues and decide how to proceed with legislative reforms.

Shareholders should have the ability to effectively choose their boards and be entitled to vote against candidates for election to the board. In fact, in October 2014, a discussion paper by the UN, Principles for Responsible Investment, notes that a stronger nomination process is fundamental to board effectiveness and shareholders should have an active role in the process. In addition to encouraging boards to engage with their shareholders in regard to the composition of the board, it's the belief that large shareholders should be allowed to propose nominees whose names would be added to the ballot, thereby eliminating a closed slate of directors suggested by the company and allowing a greater choice.

Another change which Bill 128 proposes is one of majority voting. As I spoke of earlier, the current practice for elections to a board of directors under the Canadian legislation is based on the plurality system rather than a majority system. Again, shareholders are allowed to vote either in favour of a nominee or to withhold their vote, which means no vote, for or against. In this system, a director can technically be elected to a board with only one vote in his or her favour. Bill 128 proposes a policy that would require directors who have been nominated for re-election to submit their resignation if they receive a majority of withheld votes, creating, in effect, an indirect form of a no vote. The board can then decide whether to accept the resignation.

Canada has already seen how this new voting process can work. Despite the absence of legislative reform, many companies in Canada have adopted the majority voting policy on their own. Last year, the Toronto Stock Exchange adopted a rule requiring all of its listed companies to adopt a majority voting policy. This ensured that a core group of major Canadian companies are now offering their shareholders a mechanism to try to vote out unpopular or unwanted directors.

The underlying idea behind an enhanced ability for shareholders to have a meaningful say in the nomination of the board of directors is a benefit to the corporation and a fundamental belief in shareholder democracy. A slate of nominees in a non-contested election for a board

of directors, where the number of nominees equals the number of openings on the board and with all nominees having been selected by the existing board, often with input from the CEO, without equal or balanced input into the composition by voting participants, is not a true shareholder democracy. Shareholders are, in fact, the owners of the company, so why shouldn't they have the option to remove members of the board who are ineffective?

1420

So far, shareholders who do have the option of majority voting have used the power sparingly. I could find only one example: a director from the Quebecor Inc. board who had lost a vote. He offered his resignation, but the board did not accept it. This highlights the weakness of the current system. The director at Quebecor has very low support from shareholders, yet remains on the board. Shareholders voted, but their votes were ignored by the board, proving the majority voting policy to be too indirect a tool.

Only legislative reform can ensure a new voting system is preserved in law.

The third point I'd like to discuss is in regard to shareholder involvement in directors' and management compensation. Investors are becoming much more assertive in regard to the lack of connection between executive remuneration and company performance. The current system in Canada has been criticized for having little control over the compensation structure, with concerns raised over salaries and bonuses paid annually to executives, despite falling company performance and share prices.

Bill 128 proposes adopting a say-on-pay policy that would provide shareholders to fully understand the organization's philosophy and policies used in regard to its approach to executive pay decisions, and to have an advisory vote on their approach. The purpose of the say-on-pay advisory vote is to provide accountability to shareholders for the board's compensation decisions by giving shareholders an opportunity to offer their views. Companies would include an annual advisory proposal where shareholders can vote for or against the executive compensation plan proposed by the company. The advisory vote would provide shareholders an opportunity to express their satisfaction with the board's approach to executive compensation in the years that payments have been made, as well as over a longer period of time.

The company's approach to compensation should reinforce the links between compensation and its strategic objectives and risk management processes, using financial and non-financial measures of the achievement of the company's goals over a number of years.

While shareholders will provide their collective advisory vote, the board of directors remains fully responsible for their decisions on compensation and are not relieved of their responsibilities by a positive advisory vote from the shareholders.

Establishing a reasonable approach to conducting say-on-pay votes and continually acting on the outcome, the

say-on-pay process can offer companies a unique opportunity to better connect with their shareholders and the general investment community. Offering a practical mechanism that would make the shareholders' right to elect directors meaningful will ultimately strengthen shareholder democracy and modernize and strengthen Ontario's position in the global marketplace.

I support legislation that will strengthen boards and their effectiveness and, through them, strengthen the companies that they govern, and I support the changes to business laws which will make voting truly democratic. I am pleased, therefore, to support my colleague in his attempt to amend the Business Corporations Act.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I am pleased to rise in debate on the bill before us today. I want to start out by commending the member for a couple of things. I've known him personally for some time here in the Legislature. He has obviously done his homework. This is a serious bill for our contemplation. It has in it some significant structural changes to the way that shares work, the notification of shareholders, proxy votes and the employment of directors. I commend the member for bringing forward a weighty piece of legislation.

I know, from listening to the member's speech, a bit about his biography, too. He has been a successful businessman, which is always good to see, because that's a sacrifice from some of the income you can make in the private sector to serve the people in the Ontario Legislature. He knows of what he speaks because he's also a successful investor. I think that, at the core of his remarks here, he is trying to enable ordinary shareholders to have a greater say in the way that a company is run.

I'll make a guess here. I, too, have some investments, but I'm going to guess that they're not as extensive as the member's. There was a colleague—probably one of the most loved members of the assembly in my time here: Al Palladini. God rest his soul: a great man; a strong business leader; a great Canadian immigration story as well. He served as transportation and economic development minister. He, sadly, passed away. I remember, when the member for York-Simcoe and I were in office, that tragic caucus meeting when Premier Harris announced that Al had passed away while on vacation. But I used to joke with Al, saying that his suits were worth more than my entire investments and savings that I had. He earned it the good old-fashioned way.

I appreciate what the member is saying about proxy forms as well. I certainly get them in the mail. I'm always wondering if I just randomly cross out two directors, because I want to do that—and see what happens as a result. But as he points out, that's not allowed. I think there has to be a better way than the current process that we have.

I know as well that, recently, the ministry brought forward a document that looked at modernizing the Business Corporations Act of Ontario, the OBCA—the Priorities Findings and Recommendations Report. It's relatively

recent, too: June 2015. I know the member has read through it. Some of his items are in this bill; some are not.

Shortly, we'll be addressing my private member's bill as well on the sharing economy. Just the advent of technology and communications and democratizing decisions that we make in the marketplace or in shareholder offerings I think opens up new avenues for a lot of us as shareholders to actually participate in the governance of companies, whether it's their pay packages—a significant part of Mr. Takhar's bill today, how that is determined—to who sits on boards of directors.

I want to point out that recommendation 2(a)(i) talks about contemplating electronic meetings and communications. I think it's important to read into the record for the debate, and I know my colleague will have more to say in his wrap-up comments after we've all had a chance to speak on the bill. Perhaps he could comment on how he sees this moving forward as well.

But subsection (i) says that "Information technology has become a key driver of operational efficiency and an accepted means of communications in most circumstances." I think we would all agree with that; it's a good thing. "The OBCA currently creates barriers to efficient communications. For example, it requires consent from directors to have that meeting held by telephone or other electronic means and requires various notices to be delivered by prepaid mail." That certainly reflects that the OBCA is dramatically out of date and will probably sideline a significant number of retail investors who want to participate in the future governance of where their investments are. I know my colleague would probably have some more experience in this, but it seems to be sensible. We want to try to clear some of those things aside to allow more electronic communication participation, even by telephone.

I certainly remember convening meetings of some tens of thousands of Ontarians from time to time on the telephone. I know the member for St. Catharines avidly listened to those conversations and enjoyed participating when he got those calls. Look, if we could do that as a commonplace practice in our own work in politics, surely there must be means to hear directly from shareholders through electronic means.

Sub (iii): I know the member speaks to this in his bill as well—"Allowing shareholders to effectively determine the composition of their boards of directors by eliminating certain legislative requirements.

"Shareholders should have the ability to effectively choose their boards." We would agree with that. We certainly have to go through a relatively arduous process to find our place here. "For example, they should be entitled to vote against candidates for election to the board"—individual candidates, not the whole slate, Speaker. "Moreover, the OBCA should no longer limit the global reach of Ontario business through outdated concepts such as Canadian residency requirements for boards of directors. Canadian residency requirements in the OBCA drive businesses away from Ontario to

incorporate in other ... jurisdictions that" don't have these stringent requirements.

The world's become a smaller place with a lot of talent, and talent is mobile. I think that subsection 2(a)(iii) is a very important suggestion. Hopefully, it will be adopted. I don't think it's in this bill, but if it goes to committee there are opportunities to expand what my colleague is trying to do. I want to see the best talent on those boards. If they don't live in Ontario—look, that impacts another corporation setting up shop here, so let's get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank you for speaking to the bill.

Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I commend the member from Mississauga—Erindale for his bill. What he's essentially calling for is a further democratization of the process of dealing with boards of directors in private companies. Of course, it does beg the question, in those companies owned by the public, how is that democracy exercised? Certainly, we have a glaring example in the province of Ontario right now where the public owns a company, and one could assume that to garner the votes of that community, one would look at a referendum perhaps, or simply a polling of what that community thinks.

In Ontario right now, we have over 80% of Ontarians who oppose the sale of Hydro One, which is a company owned by us. I would suggest to the member that not only is he correct about privately held companies, but he is also correct about publicly owned ones, in the true sense, where we publicly own a resource at our disposal.

In this particular instance, the cabinet would be like the board of directors; the Premier, like the CEO. What the public is saying to them is very clear, backed up, of course, today, by the FAO. They're saying, "Do not sell this company. Won't you listen to us? It makes no sense. It makes us no money. Don't do it."

I would respectfully suggest to the member opposite that he apply his own solution to the government's problem, and that is the sell-off of one of our most valuable resources.

1430

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I want to thank all the members who participated in the discussion. I am especially very thankful to the member from Niagara West, actually, who has made some very thoughtful comments.

Let me address some of the issues. The member from Thornhill actually said that I used strong words. If she had listened, I really quoted words from a *Globe and Mail* editorial. Those were not my words; those were the words that were in the newspaper. She said I used some US examples. I'm not sure where I used a US example, because there is nothing in my notes that talks about that.

The member from Niagara Falls made some good comments. I'm very thankful to him, but I want to tell

him this: This legislation is advocating majority voting. Even for proxy holders, it is majority voting.

This legislation applies to both public companies and private companies, so that issue is being addressed.

I am really a little bit puzzled by these comments that we are trying to reduce the threshold, which gives, actually, the shareholders more power to influence the board of directors. So why the member from the NDP would object to that, I really don't understand. That issue is a good issue for the shareholders to have—a low threshold so they can call a meeting of the shareholders whenever they are not satisfied with the current directors. That is their prerogative; they own the companies. If they own the companies, they should be able to call a meeting of the shareholders. If that means an expense, it's their expense because they own the companies.

I am very thankful to my colleague from Brampton-Springdale, who made an even better presentation than I did. She has made some very, very good comments.

And then, again, the member Parkdale-High Park: I want to say that this legislation is actually amending the Business Corporations Act, and the Business Corporations Act applies to both public companies and private companies. I think the core issue here is what powers the shareholders should have, because they made an investment; they own the companies. What kind of powers do they need to have in order to make the directors accountable so that they can manage the companies on their behalf, the way they want it? One of the main rights that they have is actually electing directors. If they cannot influence the election of directors, if they cannot choose the directors of their own choice, then their investment in this company is being handled by people who are not aligned to their issues.

The other issue in this legislation is about controlling the pay of the directors and the senior officers. It is important that the pay of senior officers and directors should be in accordance with the policy that is approved by the shareholders. If it is not being followed, then they should be able to have the chance to retract it and change that policy.

So, Mr. Speaker, this legislation actually makes a lot sense and addresses a lot of the issues that even the Minister of Government and Consumer Services—the panel that he appointed has made recommendations. It also addresses the issues that have been raised by various authorities with regard to giving more power to the shareholders and enforcing their rights.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga-Erindale is now entitled to two more minutes for a response to the entire debate.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that it has been a good debate. As I've always said, I am prepared to look at some good recommendations that will come forward from my colleagues.

The member from Niagara West suggested, I think, that maybe we should make more use of electronic voting and so on. On that point, I want to say that corporation bylaws sometimes allow voting to be held or meetings to

be held by telephone or through electronic means. If that is not working, we could definitely include it as part of the legislation. I'm all for any good suggestions that come that can actually enhance shareholder democracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

OPPORTUNITY IN THE SHARING ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES POSSIBILITÉS OFFERTES PAR L'ÉCONOMIE DE PARTAGE

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 131, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend other Acts to regulate transportation network vehicles, to provide freedom for individual residential property owners to share their property for consideration with others and to deal with the expenses of public sector employees and contractors in that connection / Projet de loi 131, Loi visant à édicter deux nouvelles lois et à modifier d'autres lois pour réglementer les véhicules de réseau numérique de transport, pour donner aux particuliers propriétaires de biens résidentiels la liberté de partager leur bien avec d'autres moyennant contrepartie et pour traiter des dépenses des employés et entrepreneurs du secteur public en lien avec ces questions.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll call it the Opportunity in the Sharing Economy Act, because the other title is a bit more than a mouthful.

Speaker, there are two commodities in life that we don't have nearly enough of: time and money. Through the use of modern consumer technology—the simple push on the pad on your smart phone—you could have a bit more of both. It also makes life a lot more convenient. I certainly see that in our own family, and I know that my colleague from Kitchener-Conegostoga sees it with his three little ones. We certainly do with Miller and Maitland as well. We'd love to have a little bit of both of those commodities: time and a bit more money. Let me tell you why that is relevant to my bill on the sharing economy.

Right now across Ontario, so many people are struggling just to make ends meet. The Bank of Montreal's recent Rainy Day Survey, as they called it, looked at the status of not just Ontarians but Canadians. It found that more than half of Canadians do not even have \$10,000 in savings that they could access as a rainy day fund. Say, sadly due to weather, your roof caves in, or you have a major accident, more than half would be hard pressed to find the money to address that. In fact, a quarter of Canadians are living from paycheque to paycheque with no money whatsoever being put away for savings.

We have larger debates in this assembly about the level of taxation. We have larger debates about how we can spur the economy and create jobs in general. Here's something we can do right away, and that is to empower people to earn a little bit more money from assets they already own—in my bill, their home, their car and their parking space.

So the Opportunity in the Sharing Economy Act has, really, four major parts that I'll address in the time I have, and then look forward to comments from my colleagues in all three parties about this exciting new opportunity for Ontarians, and a chance for us to lead when it comes to embracing new consumer technologies to create new jobs in our province.

Right off the top, I want to say one particular thanks, and that is to Michael Wood. Michael Wood works for all of us as a drafter—I think he's actually employed in the Attorney General's office. My colleagues have probably had Michael helping write their own private members' bills. He did an outstanding job. This bill is 42 pages long. It is relatively complex for what we often consider, and I want to send a debt of gratitude to Michael for his extraordinary work in the ambition of the bill and making it a reality by going through a series of different laws. He showed incredible patience, had very good judgment and gave me some helpful advice.

1440

We heard from a lot of stakeholders as well, from mayors, from industry leaders, whether the Ubers, the Airbnbs or the Rovers, to the hotel industry, to the taxi industry. I spoke with mayors and civil servants from all the major cities in the province where Uber is currently present. They said, "You know what? These technology improvements are upon us, and consumers are reacting." Unfortunately, government is not reacting. We're having a debate, almost a guerrilla warfare, on a municipality-by-municipality-by-municipality basis. I'll explain why that's harmful to the bigger picture and why we need to take action.

I think it's time that we had this conversation. It's time that we had the debate. It's time that we actually took action to empower people to make more money from things that they own, to free up consumers to improve their quality of life by having more time and more money on their hands through these innovative technologies, and to send a signal that Ontario is open for business, entrepreneurship and innovation.

I want to, as well, in the introductory part of my comments commend the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, Michael Harris. He was a trailblazer on this. He brought forward the first motion on transportation network companies back in May 2015. Good for him; he got the ball rolling. I'll continue pushing it up that hill.

Part one: If government wants to encourage an activity, there should probably be a customer. We've got all kinds of labs and incubators. I've certainly visited the DMZ at Ryerson—a great one; Communitech in Kitchener-Waterloo; and the MaRS Innovation centre. One thing they've found in other places that worked, and

worked well, in New York City and London, is to make sure that there is a customer at the end of the line. You can get all the mentors in the world you want—it's the customer that's actually going to get you focused on selling your product and improving its quality.

There are calls across the broader public service for equivalency; basically, that there should be no bias towards the built economy and against the new sharing economy. The sharing economy, by the way, is also called collaborative consumption, peer-to-peer, the chance to lend or borrow or purchase from peers goods or services. The biggest ones we hear about: Uber and Airbnb. I talk about Rover a lot here in Toronto. TaskRabbit—there are literally hundreds of them; thousands of them.

What I do in the bill is I say that across government, you need to treat the two equivalently. A taxicab receipt for expenses, if you're allowed that, would be treated the same way as an Uber receipt. A receipt at an Airbnb or a HomeAway or a VRBO location would be treated the same way as a hotel; that a parking receipt at a Green P be the same as Rover, for example. I think government can send an important signal that they're open to the sharing economy, that they support the initiative and they support innovation by declaring that equivalency across the board.

The other part of that, by the way, is a five-year sunset review. I think, particularly when you're talking about technology, it's important to have a sunset review. That's part one.

Part two, ride sharing: Certainly, we've seen a lot of debate in our major cities in the province, and I hope that it comes to Niagara because I think it would be helpful to my riding and the constituents that I represent in neighbouring areas, and that's the issue around Uber versus the existing taxi companies. What I usually hear from people is that they actually like the service. They like the convenience. It's more affordable. I also hear people say, "You've got to level the playing field. There should be some sort of consumer protection or public safety rules around it."

As I said: My team, we did our homework. We looked at the best jurisdictions around the world, including those here in Ontario, and came up with a plan. I won't list them all; they're all in the bill. But here's the quid pro quo: You license a transportation network company and allow it to exist. They give people a chance to earn a bit more income. The average Uber driver in Ontario, by the way: about \$3,000 a year in income. One gentleman I had the other day: He was driving Uber, I think it was, about four to six hours a week to help pay for tuition for his son. He's an electrician, and his son is becoming an electrical engineer. It's not cheap. He's proud of his son, so he works on Uber on the side to help pay for that tuition and see his own son's success. I want to see more of that. I want to empower that.

What's the quid pro quo? In return, the transportation network company would have to guarantee that there is insurance. That's where the Ontario government comes

in. We run the regulatory system, through FSCO, for insurance. There has got to be insurance: for the driver, for the passenger, for the vehicle. In the bill, we would set the level. In return for a transportation network licence, the drivers would have to have clean driving records: no more than three moving violations in the last three years—three strikes and you're out—a zero tolerance policy for the use of drugs or alcohol when you're behind the wheel, and criminal background checks. There would also be consumer protection mechanisms, like making sure you know what the ride is going to cost before you get in, how they calculate the fare, a chance to review the driver and—guess what?—those drivers review you, too. They told me I'm a 4.9, so I've got to continue behaving myself. That's part two.

Part three: home sharing. Look, I'm like a lot of families across the province. I have two little girls; one is a little bit past the infant stage. When you go on vacation, on a trip, Speaker, you have two choices. You can rent out two hotel rooms, one for the parents and one for the kids—that's pretty expensive—or you can rent out one single hotel room and pack them all in and everybody is miserable and nobody gets any sleep. You've been there, Speaker.

So what have we done on the last couple of trips? We actually went through HomeAway and we rented a cottage. You had a kitchen, you had a living room and you had separate rooms. There wasn't some big government check mark that said, "You can go here." We relied on the advice of those who had been there before, people like us: what did they say about the place, pictures. We interacted with the owner. We've done this seven years in a row with great success. So why not empower more of this right here in Ontario? Do you know what? Ontario, the city of Toronto, Niagara—enormous potential—Parry Sound—Muskoka, I think, for sure, too; they're beautiful places to visit. Why not allow people to share part of their home? If they're away, they could have people stay at their house for compensation. If you've got an extra room in your place, a place above the garage, why not?

In Chicago, where this is done, the average income for a family has been about \$8,500. That's all right. I would compare ourselves in Toronto to Chicago a lot. In fact, Toronto now has about 7,000 listings alone. Canadians are adopting this technology quickly. It's a chance for a lot of people to make a few extra dollars and then show off their neighbourhoods. In Austin, Texas, they have found that yes, although hotel revenue did decline a little bit, particularly at the lower end of the market, it also brought new tourists to Austin, Texas, those who might not have gone because they couldn't afford it, or a new bunch of tourists—a lot of millennials. Although slightly older, I'm a pre-millennial. They would get to stay in neighbourhoods where there aren't hotels and they have found that awfully attractive.

So why not? Let's get going and empower Ontarians to make a little bit more money through services like Airbnb. It also gives you more choice as a consumer. So let's get going.

Part number four: parking sharing. Here is where it all wraps together. Right here in Toronto, in the province of Ontario, there's a new app called Rover. Rover will basically connect you with somebody who wants to rent out their parking spot. It may not be as much use in Beamsville or Smithville, but in Toronto and Ottawa, and maybe in downtown Kitchener, it could be of great use. Say you have a place at Yonge and Eglinton and you've got a driveway or a lot that you own behind it. You could actually rent out that spot by the hour, by the day, a little extra income coming in for that rainy day fund. It also helps to relieve congestion. One study recently said that up to 30% of traffic downtown can be people roving around looking for a parking spot. So let's allow that to happen, too. It's a great benefit on the public policy side, addressing some environmental issues through empowering this type of technology and setting rules around it.

Here's what I worry about: If we continue to throw up barriers, if we continue to say to new ideas, "You've got to fight every municipality across the province one at a time," if we want to close our doors, put our heads in the sand, think in the past—whatever analogy you want to mash together—the signal it's going to send is that Ontario is not open for business. If we want that next Uber or Airbnb to be an export industry from the province of Ontario, we need to open our doors. We need to say that this is a good thing for people, it's a good thing for technology and it's a good thing for jobs.

I want to see Rover expand here in Ontario, create jobs and export their product. I don't want to see them pack up in frustration and head down to San Francisco, California, where the other two are from.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to rise, of course, always, and I want to commend the member for addressing a really interesting topic, one that we know is evolving each and every day, given the technology that is upon us. More and more people are making these new considerations and new choices within our economy to take a different approach to what traditional methodologies would be. We're seeing it evolving in every facet, whether it's the grocery store and the way that we access food or our transportation system. Life, by and large, is getting more convenient due to the emerging technology. We can only expect that it's going to get better. We hope that it will.

1450

Certainly, government has a role to play to ensure that those technologies are promoted and supported and advanced when they do provide a benefit to consumers. It is, however, also our responsibility to ensure that these technologies are regulated and that they offer the set protections on behalf of consumers. It is our ultimate job here to ensure public protection, even in such a subject as parking. It may seem innocuous at first blush, but there are questions that arise within a parking spot. What types of vehicles will be parking there? Are the vehicles containing hazardous materials? I know that there are lots

of regulations that are imposed on businesses in terms of parking their own vehicles in their own private parking spots. Let's ensure that we're providing our due diligence, but let's also realize that the times they are a-changing. We certainly have to move along with technology and support those advancements.

We do indeed promote R&D and IT in this province to an extent in which we should and hope to be leaders. There are certainly some shining examples out of Kitchener-Waterloo, where we are the world leaders in information technology and the sharing economy.

Speaker, our leader, Andrea Horwath, had the opportunity to speak in Niagara just yesterday at the economic summit about the sharing economy. What she emphasized, and what we do as a party is emphasize that the sharing economy also has to be a fair economy. We can share, but let's ensure that it is fair.

There are many in the industries that are outlined in this bill who have provided good-quality services throughout the years. They have subscribed to the rules and complied with the rules and regulations. I speak specifically around the taxicab industry. These are folks who work hard for their money. They put in tremendous hours. They ensure the safety and the welfare of riders. They comply with the regulations; they make sure that their vehicles are compliant as well, and we ask them to do that. It is quite a regulatory burden, and one that I think many taxicab drivers would like to see a little bit of a reduction on. Nevertheless, they comply. They understand that their ultimate role is to get the person from point A to point B in a safe and effective manner.

The prominence of Uber opens up a whole new world of transportation and that modality. In full disclosure, I've never used Uber. I know what it is; I understand the technology, but I've never used it. I've never used Airbnb. At some point, I'll have to check out first-hand what these services are. So it's difficult for me to relay a personal experience, but I do know what they are. I see Uber, of course, as a matter of convenience and something that can run parallel to a traditional system, but I see it as a virtual hitchhiking type of system at this moment, where you used to stand along the road and stick your thumb up and hope that someone was kind enough to pick you up and bring you close to where your destination was. You also hoped that their vehicle was in good working order. You hoped that they weren't under the influence. You hoped that they had insurance. You hoped that they weren't going to veer off the road and take you somewhere you didn't want to go and harm you. These are things that we all took into consideration when we stuck our thumb up, and I certainly did that as an adolescent.

We have to ensure that these types of new technologies are regulated. There's a lot of foresight that's put into it. I think that we also have to do our due diligence in consulting with the various jurisdictions that will be affected by them, mainly municipalities. My colleague referenced that Uber exists in certain municipalities. In fact, Uber exists everywhere now. If you have a smart

phone, Uber exists. It can't be said that it only exists in large urban settings. It can exist in a town like Belle River, where I come from. If you have a cellphone and a car, Uber is there now. That dialogue with that municipality has to happen. This is a new consideration. I hope our municipal leaders are taking a look at it. I know that they would like to have a seat at the table when legislation is brought up that affects them. This piece of legislation specifically excludes them from talking about Uber, or bringing in municipal regulations around Uber. That's a massive, glaring omission to the bill.

Speaker, there's another thing that I think everyone in general should be concerned about and it is the fact that in our economy and through matters of commerce, we do business transactions and there are also levies attached to those transactions which we call, in this House, taxes. Taxes, in these specific sharing economy sectors—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Okay, one more minute—traditional providers like hotels and taxis collect HST, and right now these are not; these are excluded. We have to ensure that those businesses that are operating are also contributing to the roads that they will be driving on.

That's my final point. I'm proud to share my time with my colleague from Parkdale-High Park, and I appreciate your time, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the citizens in Cambridge to offer good debate. I wanted to thank the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook for introducing this private member's bill and having more conversation amongst all three parties about this subject.

My interest in the sharing economy is due in part because I live in Waterloo region. I'm sure my colleague across the way would agree that Waterloo region is renowned now as the tech hub in Canada. We have seen many innovative companies. We've seen just an absolute explosion in the IT sector and a number of different new emerging companies that are coming out of Waterloo region. It's an important conversation that needs to happen across the province when it comes to this emerging sector.

The purchasing of goods and services between consumers is nothing new. When you think back to 100, 150 years ago, many new employees moving to a new city went to boarding houses and rented a room in a home where all of the space wasn't being used, for instance. The sharing of underused assets or personal time on a rental basis is another part of it. Much like the member across the way, I have also taken part in home-sharing vacation properties. My husband was on a conference in Europe and we did actually rent an apartment so we could come and go from there, because we were there for some amount of time. It was certainly something that I have gone ahead and used myself.

In another instance, in terms of parking, when we visited my husband's niece in London, England, she was

talking then about people who didn't own cars but had parking spots on their property in London, and they were renting out those parking spots—for a huge amount of money, I might add. So this is nothing new.

We also know with any opportunities there are certainly new challenges as well, Mr. Speaker. I know that our government recognizes this and also the significant opportunities in the sharing economy that need to be explored. It's something that we first addressed in the 2015 budget. I must say I'm proud of the work that our government has been doing on this issue, so it's timely that we're now at a point where we can talk about it in the House.

If this bill moves forward to committee, there will be an opportunity to further consider the questions that are raised because of this emerging technology. We know that this bill would have a significant impact on a variety of sectors, and it's important that we work with all of our partners in order to get this right. When it comes to the sharing economy, we need to take a balanced approach. It's important that we drive innovation, but at the same time protect both the safety and the choice of Ontario's consumers. Consumers are at the heart of the emerging sharing economy, and our focus remains on consumer safety, consumer protection and consumer choice in the marketplace. In particular, Speaker, the sharing economy raises some questions that our government really needs to answer for those who may be precariously employed, or for those more vulnerable communities.

We know that the right regulatory and tax environment can help innovation thrive. It's important to recognize that aspects of the regulatory and taxation environment may need to adapt to new and previously unconsidered business models. That innovation drives competition in the marketplace, and competition ultimately benefits consumers. Our government understands this and remains committed to protecting both the safety and choice of Ontario's consumers in a rapidly changing marketplace.

1500

You know, Speaker, just before I came here I'd gone to the round table that the Ministry of Transportation is putting on this afternoon regarding autonomous vehicles—self-driving vehicles. That's another example, not of the sharing economy, but of emerging technologies that are changing the way we do business in Ontario.

There needs to be a fair balance between existing business and new operators. Indeed, we need to ensure that issues around consumer protection, insurance, taxation and the impact on the labour market are addressed. These are all subjects that I think bear a lot more discussion, not only here in the House, but at the committee level. I would like to see this bill move forward to committee so that we can start discussing some of these issues.

I know that our government is actively working with industry stakeholders in determining the right regulatory and tax environment so that we, as I said before, can help innovation thrive and maintain a level playing field for

businesses while balancing that with protecting the public interest.

We also understand that as part of a growing shift to a sharing economy, new technologies are disrupting existing business models. Therein lies the reason why we need to have a much larger discussion across government of how these new technologies and these new business models are going to affect what we currently have in Ontario. New, software-driven applications often involve thousands of individual operators, and those operators are often in the field fairly quickly. That's why we need to address this.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I really do support seeing this bill move forward into committee. I think that these kinds of conversations and the work that we're doing in government about the sharing economy can help vibrant, emerging sectors to thrive. We'll be committed to continuing to work with firms and industries to help them comply with existing obligations and to consult on an ongoing basis to make sure those obligations reflect a changing economy. Again, I myself would like to see this move forward to committee and be further discussed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to be speaking today to this thoughtful and comprehensive legislation put forward by my friend and colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook. In fact, it's so comprehensive, as we heard moments ago, that it's 42 pages long. It's very well researched, thoughtful and necessary, and I commend my colleague for bringing this forward.

The Opportunity in the Sharing Economy Act provides an excellent legal framework that protects consumers while supporting innovations that save people time and money, as well as giving others the opportunity to supplement their income.

As I said, this is much-needed legislation here in the province of Ontario, Mr. Speaker. Our laws clearly have not kept pace with technology. Unfortunately, we only get a short allotment of time to discuss this very comprehensive bill. I'm sure there are a lot of well-formed opinions in this House on the sharing economy, and it's a discussion that has been a long time coming. Hopefully we can get this bill to committee so the discussion can continue there. It's great to hear government members speaking in favour of getting this bill to committee as well.

People in this province, Mr. Speaker, are using and offering these services. They deserve clarity on where the government actually stands. Many companies find themselves competing with these new technologies, and they deserve to have the rules of engagement clearly defined. The ambiguity of the current situation is detrimental to everyone involved. This act is about facilitating the innovation and progress for a modern economy that this province desperately needs.

We need to convey to the world that Ontario is a place to turn ideas into useful new products, services and ways of doing things. The Internet has made it cheaper and

easier than ever to aggregate supply and demand, and we should be capitalizing on this instead of fighting the inevitable changes we're seeing in the marketplace.

I would also like to point out that most of the discussion of ride-sharing and home-sharing services revolves around cities and how these services operate in an urban context, but they have the potential to fulfill a real need in rural Ontario. Outside of large cities, taxis and hotels are not always easy to find and there is very little competition. The sharing economy business model could sustain the feast-or-famine demand that occurs in towns that experience large influxes of people during a particular season, or perhaps only a few days a year during fairs, tournaments and festivals.

Government cannot continue to stand in the way of progress or defer to a patchwork system of regulation by municipalities that creates challenges for everyone—innovators, consumers and our legal system—participating in the sharing economy. This government has to help Ontario families improve their financial situation. Personally, I applaud the entrepreneurial spirit that underpins the sharing economy, and I believe that we should be empowering people to seize these new and exciting opportunities.

Consumer demand for sharing-economy services is undeniable. The convenience, affordability and choice they offer have made many of these services extremely popular, even in the face of legal ambiguities. Turning a blind eye and not bringing in legislation is negligent. We need the protections this act entails as much as we need the progress it allows.

I think the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook has done an excellent job on this bill in including measures that ensure the safety and quality of service without creating a lot of red tape that overburdens companies or service providers. Embracing the progress these new technologies bring will benefit Ontario. Innovation drives economic growth. If we stifle innovation, we stifle our economic activity, the creation of wealth and growth of jobs. The economy of this province needs to recover from the loss of manufacturing, the decimation of our auto sector, the high price of electricity and other taxes.

Ontario is struggling, and we need to change how we do things here in the province of Ontario. I'd like to see the government take action, support my colleague's bill today and embrace the sharing economy and opportunities for people who want to earn a little extra income in the province of Ontario.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook. He has worked hard to bring forward this thoughtful and comprehensive legislation. I hope that everyone in this House will support it so we can get it to committee. Let's send a signal to the world that we stand on the side of innovation, competition and a modern economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a privilege to rise in this House and represent the folks in my riding and in Ontario generally.

Uber has been a real source of contention at Toronto city council and, really, when I speak, I'm going to be borrowing largely from a wonderful city councillor, ward 14 representative Gord Perks, in a column that he wrote for the *Globe and Mail*.

Suffice to say that yes, absolutely, the sharing economy is with us. But simply because a sharing economy moves along doesn't mean that we have to embrace everything that it stands for. Absolutely, Uber, Airbnb and all the sharing economy needs regulation; there's no question about it.

But let's, for a minute, just talk about who we're talking about when we talk about Uber. There are other app-based companies that also work in various jurisdictions that don't have the record Uber has. What is Uber's record? Uber refused, in 2014, to even pay the \$300 required fee, and routinely ignores regulations that Toronto city council puts before it.

It has been sued. A San Francisco family is suing Uber after a driver struck and killed their child. Uber says that it is not its problem; the driver wasn't on the clock. Yet, in Toronto, licensed drivers carry commercial insurance so they're covered when they're cruising.

Driver screening: It's claimed that the San Francisco driver had prior convictions. Toronto screens criminal and driving records before issuing a taxi licence. Uber doesn't do that.

Also, it uses surge pricing. For example, at 3 o'clock in the morning on a winter day when the weather is awful, our licensed taxi drivers know that the price stays the same. Uber's does not. Uber charges what the market will bear. That sometimes means leaving a 16-year-old young woman standing on corner.

1510

Customer safety: Because Toronto grants, and can revoke, licences, we can keep bad drivers off the streets. By using unlicensed drivers, Uber takes that public power away.

Denial of service: We have instances where Uber drivers have denied service to people and have also exhibited some problems. You know what? This is about protecting Uber drivers, because the real issue here is about precarious employment.

The member from Niagara West—Glanbrook talked about an individual who made an extra \$3,000 a year. How many hours did he work for that \$3,000? How do we regulate that? Is he taking \$2 an hour driving for Uber? How do we know? Is Uber paying taxes? How do we know? How do we regulate, and how do we actually enforce those regulations?

Not only that, there are privacy concerns. Taxicab drivers have your credit card, your phone number; they know where you live and where you travel. US Senator Al Franken recently wrote Uber asking about their privacy safeguards. Uber hasn't yet replied. You're giving this information to people, and you don't know who they are.

There have been all sorts of documented problems with Uber. CNN reported that Uber affiliates have placed

thousands of fake orders with a rival taxi company. Far from improving competition, this tactic aims to break competitors and regulators alike.

Again, let's look at who we're dealing with. This is a \$17-billion multinational company. There should be some controls over how it operates in our jurisdictions—there's no question about that—and there should be labour controls on how it operates in our jurisdictions as well. I wanted to point those things out.

Three very quick things: Auto insurance—absolutely, it's critical to have it. We don't have it now for either homes or drivers, where the sharing economy is concerned.

Two, there is no mechanism in place for taxation and the collection of taxes. When you have one regulated industry up against another unregulated industry, you don't have that control.

Three, a critical one—we already have the city of Toronto weighing in on this; they should have been consulted—municipalities need their say. We can't impose regulations and stipulations on our municipalities unilaterally without having them at the table. That is absolutely critical, and that, again, is where I differ with the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook.

We have an issue here. We have to deal with it. We have to deal with it in a transparent way, in a consultative way and in a way that protects both those who are employed by the industry—the taxi industry, the ride-sharing industry and the home and hotel industry—and we have to do it with our partners.

I don't have a lot of time. Just a few words: Again, no doubt we're on the tipping point of a brand new technology. It doesn't mean we have to abrogate our responsibility to look after those who are affected by it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to start by commanding the member from Niagara West–Glanbrook for raising a very substantive and important issue. I think it speaks to his thoughtfulness as a member in this House. It is these kinds of things—you've heard me say many times that I always like to get House duty. I think I'd scream and cry and have a tantrum if someone tried to take Thursday afternoon away from me, because I find that this is the time when we actually get to be members of Parliament, and I've always said that I think the things we debate are very deserving of our constituents.

I actually find this an issue with huge opportunity and huge challenges and concerns, and I dare say that I am not alone in that. It has certainly been an issue for the government. For those of you who love to read budgets, page 103 of our budget, Supporting the Sharing Economy, goes on to talk about—I won't read it all. It goes on to talk, very similarly to this bill, about the huge emerging challenge and opportunity for people to make money and improve quality of life, and also the challenges associated with it.

Then, on page 112 of our budget, we talk about reviewing labour laws to enhance security and competitive-

ness, some of the issues that the member from Parkdale–High Park raised—that was very much in here.

Then we talked about, "Dramatic technological change has become common in the workplace, affecting many routine-based jobs"—shifting to service sectors and an increase in non-standard employment and Internet-based and related employment, which this very much is. Our labour laws right now don't really address income security for precarious people. I talked earlier today about the labour movement and how important that is. It's very hard, in some of these cases, to ensure benefits and security.

I will support this because I think it needs to go to committee. To actually support this legislation, I would hope that the committee would take time to fully debate it because I think there is a great deal more complexity here, and it needs a really thorough hearing.

I want to recommend a couple of documents. One that argues very favourably for the sharing economy is the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's piece called Harnessing the Power of the Sharing Economy. It's a very, very thoughtful piece that they've done. It looks at risks. It looks at assessments. I'm sure the member is familiar with it. I think it's something that all of us should read.

I would also recommend to folks an article in Fortune magazine. It's not exactly the Walrus or Mother Jones, but Fortune magazine spends a lot of time looking at the experience of Uber in the Netherlands and the tax-avoidance schemes that have gone on. For every \$20 they get from the average drive in that country—for larger drives, they transfer it to a company called BV in Bermuda and then a company called CV, which has no employees. On every single \$20 that they make in revenue, which is a typical fee, they pay less than one cent in taxes. No other corporate company has that kind of challenge.

I have not used Uber. I live in a community with Beck and other folks. The three largest companies in Ontario spent \$2.5 million in Toronto on HST alone. These are hard-working families, often first-generation, often highly educated and skilled and underemployed, and in somewhat precarious employment who, quite frankly—I had a private member's bill. I didn't get a chance to do it. It was on the taxi industry and how taxi drivers are treated. I think they work very hard for very little remuneration and are charged all kinds of things. I talked to those taxi drivers a lot about what this means to them, and I've heard a variety of opinions. Some of them are very upset. I'm not prepared to support a bill that doesn't actually look also at the conditions of people, broadly, in the transportation sector. I've had others say that they're very happy with Uber, even though they're driving for Beck. I asked them why, and they say it's because they think it's usury fees they're charged and licence fees—and the little bit of money they make—and the huge rental fees have actually dropped. One driver said he makes \$300 or \$400 more a week because the competition from Uber has forced his employer, the owner of the licence, to actually reduce it. I've had others

tell me the opposite story. I've even been in a cab where the driver was actually double-timing, doing Uber calls as well as traditional dispatch calls.

So I learned one thing about this: There is no easy narrative here, and there's a lot at stake.

I come from a couple of generations of working-class Canadians. My grandmother was a char and cleaned. I have huge respect for people who do service work.

So while I think there are opportunities for many here for greater income and security, there are huge risks. As our budget said, we're trying to balance those things. On page 103, we make the case for advancing technology. On page 113, there's a cautionary tale that the government also has to bring forward labour legislation to do that. I think we need both. This is one piece. I will support it, but we need the second piece as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you for the opportunity today to speak to this forward-thinking bill that my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook has introduced to address a series of societal and economic benefits resulting from a province-wide approach to the sharing economy.

While the member's proposal covers a wide range of opportunities related to the sharing economy, I would like to provide some thoughts specifically relating to the ride-sharing aspect of the bill.

I'm a frequent Uber customer. I've had numerous opportunities and experiences to realize the long list of benefits that have accompanied the consumer-driven ride-sharing approach to getting around the city of Toronto and, recently, in the region of Waterloo, in my constituency. Whether it's e-hailing my ride on my BlackBerry, tracking it on the Uber map, rating my driver or electronic payments, it's easy to see how consumer demand for more efficient, affordable, reliable and enjoyable means of travel has led to the emergence of ride-sharing as a viable and oft-times preferable option.

1520

More than that, the whole range of Uber-related options that have accompanied the ride-sharing experience only further highlights the limitless opportunities represented by the sharing economy.

Have you had a chance to order an Uber lunch to your door, or order an Uber puppy to share some time with? Why, just yesterday, Uber customers were given the opportunity to "Clear your calendars—the kittens are coming." Customers were given the option to open their app between 11 and 3 today—I think we may have a few minutes left, Speaker, in fact; not quite—request the "kittens" option, and for 30 bucks, you'll get to enjoy 15 minutes of kitten playtime. In turn, Uber would help support Annex Cat Rescue, Just Paws Cat Rescue and the Etobicoke Humane Society—all for a great cause. Now that's innovation meeting consumer demand, Speaker. That's why apps like Uber have become so popular here in Ontario cities, across Canada and in fact across the world.

More to my colleague's overall point, it's why similar concepts like home and parking-spot sharing have taken hold in many jurisdictions. Consumers demand efficiencies, affordability, reliability and new, innovative options, and they are finding them in this new sharing economy frontier.

It's also why I feel we must listen to the member's call that recognizes the fact that as technology and new economies evolve, our legislation must also evolve with them. Bottom line, government regulations and laws should reflect what's on the market, not stifle innovative business. Further, the call for a province-wide approach would help put a stop to the piecemeal, patchwork jurisdictional regulatory schemes that have seemed to leave everyone spinning their wheels while consumer demand is simply being ignored.

Much as I attempted to engage government in the provincial ride-sharing conversation with a motion earlier, I am encouraged to see this approach to the sharing economy continue to gain ground through the legislation we are considering here today.

I commend my colleague for the work he has done to address the concerns of those leery of the change that the sharing economy represents. Specifically, today's bill calls for ride-sharing regulations that would require drivers to have a clean driving record, proper insurance and no criminal record whatsoever.

Further, the bill allows for both municipal and provincial licensing of a transportation network company, setting minimum standards around drivers, vehicles, consumer protection and safety. Drivers, of course, would be required to meet minimum standards, including proper licensing and proof of registration. It calls for a zero-tolerance policy for drugs or alcohol, and would allow municipalities stronger enforcement tools, including the use of demerit points for those with multiple offences, such as bandit cabs.

At the same time, the member has gone a step further, including an accessible vehicle fund that encourages more fully accessible vehicles to be on the road—again, forward-thinking concepts to meet the demand of consumers, demand that has truly driven the rise of the sharing economy in the first place.

Speaker, we've gotten a glimpse of the future, and it's a future that includes the sharing economy. Jurisdictions across the world need to be, and are, getting on board, or become at risk of being left behind.

With regard to ride sharing specifically, to date, close to half of the US states have passed legislation to govern ride-sharing. Here in Ontario, ride-sharing has been debated in almost all of our major cities, but we have yet to have that fulsome conversation at the provincial level here at Queen's Park—that is, until today.

I want to be clear in my call to support today's bill underlining government support for innovation, competition and consumer choice to ensure both public safety and better service for consumers in the province of Ontario.

Not only does this meet the emerging and evolving demands of consumers, a province-wide approach to the

sharing economy gives people the opportunity to put more money in their wallets by better utilizing assets they own, like their vehicle, their home or their parking location.

The people of Ontario should have the right to earn revenue from assets they own, and it's the role of government to eliminate the red tape to make that possible.

Speaker, on the front page of the Premier's website, she states that she will continue to fight for every person across this province to make sure they have access to the opportunity they so richly deserve. I submit that ride-sharing is an obvious opportunity for people in this province, and I hope the Premier and her caucus colleagues will be true to her word and allow the access to those opportunities that, again, as the Premier puts it, they so richly deserve. It's time for us to get on board or risk getting left behind. By passing this bill at Queen's Park, Ontario will be the first province in our country to regulate ride-sharing, and I look forward to that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

I now return to the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook: two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm pleased to wrap up. I appreciate the comments.

Look, this is the first legislation of its kind in Canada. I'm proud of that. We did our homework, as it is said, including sending draft bills to the cities. I know that one of my colleagues said we didn't consult. In fact, we consulted broadly. But the first time out it's not going to be perfect, and as I am certainly reminded by my wife, Debbie, and my daughters Miller and Maitland from time to time, Speaker, perfection is far from my current grasp. So let's get it to committee. I'm glad to hear input as to whether we got it right.

I appreciate the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change's comment. He's right: There are opportunities; there are concerns. So let's get to addressing them, because the technology is upon us and being taken up by so many consumers on a daily basis—there are a million Uber rides a month happening in the province of Ontario today.

The minister may well know too, because he follows these issues, that in Boston, they found a regulation similar to my process for Uber. In return, the city had access to data on traffic patterns that then helped them to adjust public transit and reduce emissions from automobiles to improve the environment as a result. So there are some compelling public policy benefits from this as well.

We also consulted with a number of industry associations, and many have come forward to endorse the bill. I appreciate the Insurance Bureau of Canada's comments. It says, "By acknowledging the importance of an effective regulatory environment, government can better ensure the protection of consumers while allowing a vibrant and emerging sector to thrive." The Ontario Home Builders' Association particularly likes the home-

sharing aspect. As I mentioned, in the States, over \$8,000 a year—that's a big mortgage payment. They appreciate the opportunity for "homeowners to leverage their properties for additional income" to pay down that mortgage and support housing affordability and greater choice.

The Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario similarly has given an endorsement letter talking about the importance of an effective regulatory environment: "Government can ... ensure the protection of consumers while allowing" the sector to emerge. And the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association—the auto dealers across the province—wrote a very thoughtful letter that talked about the importance of helping people afford a new automobile or upgrade one they own.

I thank members for their support and look forward to the vote.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

**WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2015**

**LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)**

Mrs. Albanese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 133, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 respecting permanent partial disability supplements / Projet de loi 133, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail en ce qui concerne le supplément pour invalidité partielle à caractère permanent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise in the House today and begin debate on my private member's bill. Today marks the fourth time that this piece of legislation has been presented in this Legislature. I hope that, with the support of my colleagues from all sides of the House, this time we will be able to make a difference and be successful in rectifying what is considered by many to be an historical injustice.

1530

This bill proposes an amendment to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act of 1997 so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the 1997 act.

In simpler words, it aims at correcting the fact that some permanent disability pensioners who were injured before 1989 have their workers' compensation benefits reduced every year by the same amount that their Old Age Security benefit increases for inflation.

It is a short, technical bill that has a lot of history behind it. Today, this change would benefit a more modest group of people compared to the past, but passing this amendment would symbolize fairness in the eyes of many.

Mr. Speaker, I first introduced this bill in 2011, but was not able to debate it before the provincial election that took place that same year. In 2012, it was reintroduced by MPP Mario Sergio, from the riding of York West. He also didn't get a chance to bring it to second reading, as he was appointed minister responsible for seniors shortly after, and as we all know, ministers do not present private members' bills. The bill was reintroduced again in 2013, I believe, by my fellow MPP Lorenzo Berardinetti, from Scarborough Southwest. It went to second reading, but then it died on the order paper.

It is not a coincidence, in my opinion, that this piece of legislation has been championed by three MPPs of Italian-Canadian background. This community has traditionally made significant contributions to areas such as workplace safety and labour issues in Ontario. When Italian immigrants flocked to Canada after the Second World War in search of a better life, many found work in the construction industry. In the 1960s, more than 15,000 Italian men worked in Toronto alone, representing one third of all construction workers in our city.

At that time, for these men, simply going to work every morning comported risks to life and limb. A well-known example of the dangers of working in construction in those days is the Hogg's Hollow disaster. As you may remember, Mr. Speaker, on March 17, 1960, five young Italian immigrant construction workers were killed after becoming trapped in a tunnel while building a water main. This tragedy highlighted the need for safety regulations, and ultimately led to significant changes to workplace safety laws in Ontario. It also motivated the Italian Canadian community to take on a greater advocacy role in respect to safer working conditions and the protection of injured workers.

Robert Storey, a professor at McMaster University, in his seminal book, *Their Only Power Was Moral: The Injured Workers' Movement in Toronto, 1970-1985*, quotes Vincenzo Pietropaolo, formerly a city planner and now a respected historical photographer who has chronicled the workers' experience in the Italian community in Toronto. In an interview included in the book, Pietropaolo states that in those days, everyone in the Italian community knew someone who had suffered a work-related injury. That is why that advocacy has continued through time and to this day.

I would like to take a moment to pay tribute to the people who first brought to my attention the issue we are debating today. They are Orlando Buonastella, commun-

ity legal worker with Injured Workers' Consultants; Gino Cucchi, who has been president of Comites, an organization that works to identify and support the needs of the Italian community; and Antonio, or Tony, Mauro, an injured worker who has been personally affected by the lack of fairness of the current laws. We'll speak about Antonio in a moment.

Orlando, Gino and Antonio are here today, together with other representatives of the injured workers. We have Karl Crevar, from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups and the Canadian Injured Workers Alliance, who's here from Hamilton; Margery Wardle, from the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, who's here from Ottawa; and we also have Mario Marra and Fulvio Florio, who are long-time community advocates. Thank you for being here.

So Orlando, Gino and Antonio were the first to bring this issue to my attention back in 2009, when I also facilitated a meeting between advocates from the Italian Canadian community and then-Minister of Labour Peter Fonseca to talk about WSIB issues, cost-of-living issues and a special case of unfairness. They explained that the root of the issue can be traced back to 1994, when the government of the day introduced a workers' compensation reform bill, Bill 165, which went into effect in 1995.

From that point on, injuries that occurred after the new system came into force are dealt with under the new system, but claims existing under prior systems continue to be governed by the old legislation. Under the old legislation, a worker who in the opinion of the Workers' Compensation Board was not likely to achieve his or her pre-injury earnings was eligible for a \$200 monthly supplement. The supplement was intended for older injured workers who often lacked the necessary language skills or education to benefit from job retraining, and who were not expected to return to the workforce.

The problem arises when these older workers reach the age of 65 and Old Age Security starts being factored in with their WSIB benefits. For those injured before 1985, the sum of their pension, the supplement, any other wages and the Old Age Security cannot exceed a ceiling of 75% of their pre-injury earnings. For those injured before 1989, the sum cannot exceed a ceiling of 90% of their pre-injury earnings. The result is that these injured workers never get any increase. Any time Old Age Security is adjusted for inflation, their WSIB payments are clawed back.

In Antonio Mauro's case, the payment he receives cannot exceed the amount of money he made 43 years ago. Antonio's story is well-known within his community and beyond. He has relentlessly written to ministers and MPPs, and reached out to the media. He has never given up the hope that his plight will be heard.

Antonio Mauro is now 82 years old. He came to Canada in 1956 from a small Calabrian town, Malito, with many dreams for his future and a strong will to contribute to our society. He found work as a carpenter. In 1972, at the age of 38, he suffered a severe injury to his back that didn't allow him to ever return to work.

Patty Winsa, a news reporter with the Toronto Star, wrote an article featuring Antonio Mauro's story about a year ago. Here's how she describes his current situation:

"Mauro is in an unusual category: an older worker who has lived long enough to be subject to a WSIB law that caps his benefits—including Old Age Security—at about 90% of his 1970s salary.

"The cap means that quarterly cost-of-living increases in OAS are clawed back from Mauro's monthly WSIB cheques, even though OAS is a universal benefit that most seniors who earn less than \$114,815 are entitled to"—there are not too many, I believe.

She goes on to explain, "Older workers can only rely on Old Age Security if they've been in the country for 10 years or more. And for people like Mauro, injured at a young age, Canada Pension Plan payouts are low because he has missed years of contributions."

I would also like to share with my colleagues here in the House what John McKinnon, lawyer and director of the Injured Workers Consultants community legal clinic and highly regarded as an expert in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, has written in this regard: "It makes absolutely no sense that workers' compensation benefits should be reduced by Old Age Security benefits. The Old Age Security benefit is not connected to disability or earnings; it is based on how many years you have lived in Canada."

When this bill was previously debated in this Legislature, some MPPs raised concerns that by supporting this piece of legislation, a new entitlement would be created without a new revenue stream. So I want to be clear: The bill I am proposing applies only to workers who were injured before 1990, who received a supplement for not being able to return to work, and that is now reduced by the calculation or integration of Old Age Security. Mr. Speaker, it simply isn't fair to punish these workers just because they were injured in the workplace before 1990. It is a question of fairness.

1540

Injured workers, such as Antonio Mauro, who is here with us today, and who, in 1972, was earning \$2.10 an hour, should not be penalized and should not be subject to this unfair clawback.

I therefore encourage my fellow MPPs to support this bill and to help me correct this injustice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to respond to Bill 133, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 respecting permanent partial disability supplements, standing in the name of the member for York South-Weston. This bill was first introduced in this Legislature just two days ago, so we've been feverishly scrambling to get ready for this debate this afternoon.

I do want to say to the member, I want to compliment her at the outset. The member for York South-Weston, in my view, is a thoughtful and dedicated MPP who actively participates in this House and in legislative

committees. I know that she served in the Legislature for about eight years now, going back to 2007. She was re-elected in 2011 and again in 2014. I think she currently serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, which is an important responsibility within this House, and I know that she had a very distinguished career in broadcast journalism before she was first elected.

I know her as a member who is loyal to her caucus but is not blindly partisan to everything that goes on in this place. As one of the presiding officers in this House, I appreciate that. I can't recall a single instance when she was ever called to order or was ever warned by any Speaker. She obviously respects the institutions that she's privileged to serve. I would say that at the outset,

The member said in her introductory remarks that this bill has been introduced now for the fourth time. She mentioned that the current minister responsible for seniors, as well as the member for Scarborough Southwest, have each introduced a bill like this. It's the second time she, herself, has introduced it. The next comment I'm going to make is not a reflection on the member but maybe more so on the government. If the bill has been introduced four times by government members, one would wonder why hasn't the government either introduced a bill or taken the opportunity, in other labour legislation that opens up workers' compensation legislation, to include these provisions in government legislation such that it will actually pass? I say that recognizing that private members' public business is an important part of the process, too.

If indeed this bill passes the Legislature and goes to committee, I know that the member would want to actually have it dealt with at committee, with public hearings to take place at committee, such that it can be referred back to the House. I wouldn't question her sincerity in that. I would say to her, in my experience in this House, persistence does pay off eventually over time if you keep raising an issue.

We do have some concerns. I know that, first of all, I want to articulate on behalf of our caucus that we support fairness in compensation to injured workers. We always have. We recognize that employers pay premiums to WSIB as part of their payroll costs. We recognize that high payroll costs in Ontario today are already inhibiting new job creation, and we know that the pending Ontario Retirement Pension Plan represents an even higher payroll cost for employers and lower take-home pay for workers if, indeed, it is acted upon as the government says it wants to.

I would also add that, as a general principle, before our caucus would want to agree on increasing any WSIB benefits, we would insist on seeing an honest accounting of what these initiatives are going to cost the employers of Ontario or what it's going to cost in terms of a growing unfunded liability at the WSIB.

I have some comments that were given to me by a friend of mine, Mr. Les Liversidge, who is here today. Les, I want to welcome you to the Legislature. We

appreciate your advice on matters concerning workers' compensation. He's given me some suggestions that I think need to be put on the record here. He talks about the reason for the OAS clawback as it exists today. He says, "The reason is simple—an injured worker's de facto post-retirement income should not increase by virtue of the effect of the OAS benefit."

"This rationale is consistent with the wage-replacement nexus of workers' compensation. The general \$200 per month pension"—that the member referred to—"was introduced to recognize perceived systemic under-compensation for workers who were/are unable to increase earnings to pre-injury levels. The benefit, which was a nominal gesture, was never designed to represent actual loss but nonetheless is structurally linked to the wage-loss concepts by virtue of its default connection to section 147(4). It is important to note that supplements to lifelong pensions were increased by \$200, not the lifelong pension itself. Workers who did in combination of post-injury earnings and pension benefits approximate pre-injury income, did not receive a section 147(14) supplement."

"If a worker is not eligible for OAS, there is no clawback, and the 'net' pension would still be comparable to the clawed-back pension (inclusive of OAS).

"The OAS clawback," he says, "is a reasonable proposition. The principled policy reasons behind its inception remain valid in 2015," this year.

"However, the effect is likely very different as the pool for section 147(14) recipients has likely decreased over time.

"It should be noted that labour and injured-worker advocacy groups have always opposed the clawback."

We recognize that, but at the same time we need to put that concern on the record. I believe that it's important advice that, if indeed the bill passes, the committee needs to consider.

I also want to acknowledge my colleague for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, who will be coming up shortly on behalf of our party. He was the former labour critic for our party when this bill was last introduced and he made some very valid and pertinent points. Since I am running out of time, perhaps I should just let him make those valid and pertinent points when he gets a chance in a few seconds' time.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I express my appreciation to the member. We do have some concerns that I feel obligated to put on the record, but we thank the member for bringing this bill forward today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm always proud to speak in this House on behalf of my constituents of London-Fanshawe. I stand today to speak to Bill 133, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 respecting permanent partial disability supplements.

Speaker, a version of this bill was introduced several times, as the member mentioned. I'm happy that the member from York South-Weston has brought this bill forward again in this Legislature.

Currently, a worker's permanent partial disability WSIB benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act cannot be more than the amount of a full monthly benefit, under section 3 of the Old Age Security Act. What this bill does is to ensure that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries under the pre-1997 act. While this may not affect many older injured workers, it is a positive step in removing barriers to workers in order for them to receive the full WSIB benefits they deserve.

As our critic for seniors, I have heard of these incidents happening in the past, and I am happy that this government has a bill to address these issues. Moreover, when I speak to seniors or listen to injured workers on pensions, they describe how when their OAS amounts increase, their WSIB decreases, keeping their overall income the same. For many older people struggling to pay bills and put food on the table, this bill will help those injured to receive their full benefits.

Seniors, especially injured workers, face a specific set of issues that other demographic groups in our province may not experience. The rising cost of drugs, our under-funded public health care system, and having family and friends to support them are just some examples of issues that these individuals may face. We as legislators should be doing everything we can to ensure the well-being of our injured workers, as well as of our aging population.

Speaker, workers deserve their fair share and should not be subject to clawbacks of their WSIB benefits. Yet it was this government that appointed WSIB head David Marshall, who was credited with ushering in an age of austerity at WSIB for injured workers, where he received gold-plated bonuses for driving down rates. It was recently very quietly announced that David Marshall would come on board as the new consultant on the province's ORPP, thus shortening his time at WSIB. His exit has been celebrated by injured workers, advocates and workers themselves, who don't deserve for their benefits to be attacked because of this government's austerity agenda with WSIB with that gentleman at the helm.

1550

This bill also highlights this government's inaction on the WSIB file and failure to take action on the major Arthurs recommendations, including experience rating, which Harry Arthurs has seriously called into question. This is how experience rating works, and this is why Arthurs had real concerns about the program in his landmark WSIB study. Employers who are able to hide their serious injuries as something called "no-lost-time medical aid accidents" and reduce their compensation costs then become eligible to receive a rebate from WSIB. The other side of this perverse program provides penalties for employers who have a higher level of lost-time injury statistics and costs.

Between the two kinds of incentives, the money at stake for many employers can add up to millions: roughly

\$200 million per year throughout Ontario. In fact, it has been estimated that over \$2 billion in rebates have gone to companies over the past 10 years without any sign that the program has actually reduced injuries. The important point is that the two sides of the experience rating program skew the lost-time injury statistics for Ontario by providing a powerful incentive for employers to under-report. In other words, no matter how badly injured a worker is on the job, as long as he or she comes to work, employers are rewarded under the experience rating.

Speaker, hopefully this small change to WSIB will be followed by a more substantive and detailed look at the WSIB file. I hope this government finally gives workers the rights that they deserve.

Thank you for the time to speak on this very important bill, and I am very glad to see that there is a small step being made forward on WSIB.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: As always, it's my pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Burlington and speak to this important bill, Bill 133, brought forward by my colleague the member from York South-Weston, and in doing so, join the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and the member from London-Fanshawe.

Ontarians enjoy a great quality of life but, regrettably, accidents can happen, and sometimes they change lives in an instant. In the context of today's conversation in particular, we all know that accidents can happen and, sadly, they can and do happen in the workplace. Much can be done to reduce the likelihood of such occurrences. In fact, Ontario has made important strides to reduce risk in workplaces across our province. But despite our best efforts, unfortunately, accidents still do happen. Ontarians who find themselves in such situations can sometimes end up being unable to work ever again, and so they turn to WSIB to help support them.

Sadly, as we are all aware, it can be very difficult to live on a fixed income. Every dollar counts when you have bills to pay and no ability to increase your earnings each month. This can be especially difficult for our seniors, who often incur extra expenses for things like mobility devices, medication or accessing transit. I have first-hand experience with this as, in my riding of Burlington, almost one in five residents is a senior.

It is our responsibility as legislators to protect the most vulnerable members in our communities, and this piece of legislation will go a long way in ensuring that those who have suffered a work-related injury are able to enjoy the same quality of life as everyone else.

Under the current rules, workers injured prior to 1985 and who have reached the age of 65 cannot have the sum of their compensation, including pensions for Old Age Security, equal more than 75% of their pre-injury earnings. Similarly, individuals injured after 1985 but prior to 1990 cannot have their compensation exceed 90% of their pre-injury earnings. In essence, this means

that, as one form of compensation increases, another will decrease proportionately, resulting in a net-zero change in overall benefits.

This important bill will allow injured workers to earn over the 75%-or-90% threshold when their Old Age Security amounts increase. We can help to avoid the heartbreaking stories of seniors who have been injured while at work and are still earning the same amount each month as they did in the 1970s and 1980s. The cost of living increases each year, and it is unfair to expect that anyone can survive with no increase in their monthly income, year after year. Allowing overall compensation amounts to increase will help many seniors who have experienced a serious workplace injury to enjoy a higher quality of life and the dignity of a higher income.

Mr. Speaker, we need to protect injured workers, especially when they reach the age of 65. I'd like to commend my colleague from York South-Weston once again for bringing forward this important piece of legislation and engaging us in this debate. I know my constituents in Burlington will be comforted, knowing that their government is looking out for them as they get older.

Every day in this place, we have the privilege of discussing issues that really impact the lives of all the people we serve. I urge all members of this House to support this important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise just for a few minutes to add to this debate and speak to this bill. Of course, it's always a pleasure to speak to private members' bills because we each only get one opportunity every year, so I know it's going to be a bill that the member feels strongly about and has put a lot of work into.

Today, we're obviously talking about Bill 133, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act. This act proposes to amend section 110 of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act so that any pension a worker is eligible for under the Old Age Security Act does not reduce the worker's permanent partial disability benefits for pre-1985 and pre-1989 injuries.

Of course, as we've heard from the member who introduced this bill, and other members, this isn't the first time that the House has seen this bill. I believe, since I was first elected in 2011, we've seen it a couple of times, back in 2012 and again in 2013. In 2013, I think, it went to committee but never made it back to the House for third reading. I'm not sure if it was because the government of the day realized that it wasn't prudent or what the actual reason was.

Interjection.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Elections do get in the way, sometimes, of private members' bills as well.

But it does make me wonder what the government's true position is on this bill. As I said, we keep seeing it brought forward from the government side of the House,

but it doesn't appear to have the political will from the government and the Premier's office to make it law.

That being said, I applaud the determination of the member from York South-Weston, who supported this bill when it was brought forward by the former member, as she said earlier, from Scarborough Southwest, and has reintroduced it a couple of times herself. I know it's a very well-intentioned bill.

I guess my main problem with this bill—and I spoke to this bill once or twice in the past—is the fact that there could be a whole series of unintended consequences and outcomes.

As I understand it, there is a real potential that the new benefits being added with this bill will be subject to costly litigation as other recipients seek to have the benefits applied more broadly. Not only is this bill a complete change in direction for Ontario's WSIB program, it would require, to my knowledge, that the WSIB would have to revisit their entire funding strategy.

If this isn't exactly what you think, you've got a couple of minutes to respond to some of these questions.

Bill 133 creates benefits without accounting for additional funding that will be necessary. There's a huge potential that these changes could be applied retroactively, which would, in my opinion, dramatically increase the costs for the WSIB. Of course, we know the situation with the unfunded liability of the WSIB alone, not to mention the fiscal situation of the province.

I'm going to leave it at that. I wanted to get a number of issues from the past from this bill, to allow the opportunity for the member to respond.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my privilege to speak in this House, and especially today, on Bill 133.

This is a good and necessary piece of legislation that tweaks the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. It is good and it is necessary, albeit somewhat limited.

This change would simply eliminate the deduction made to WSIB payouts to those receiving old age pensions on claims pre-1985, pre-1987, and under the pre-1997 act.

This piece of legislation seeks to correct the unfair reality that some WSIB claimants who were injured before 1990 are faced with. As it stands currently, these disability pensioners have their worker's compensation benefits reduced every year by the same amount that Old Age Security, or OAS, benefits increase due to inflation.

1600

I'd like it take a moment before I launch right into it to acknowledge and welcome Antonio Mauro here today to the Legislature and those who have joined him. Welcome and thank you for coming. As we see from Mr. Mauro's story, we have a tangled and unfair part of the system that needs to be fixed.

I would like to share part of a paper written by lawyer John McKinnon whom we've already heard about today. He's with the Injured Workers' Consultants Community Legal Clinic in Toronto. The paper that I'd like to draw

from is called Age-Based Discrimination in Ontario's Workers' Compensation Laws. I'd like to share his explanation of this specific issue. "Since many of these injured workers' pensions are based on low wages from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and were not fully adjusted for inflation, they have reached the stage where their pension plus the" supplement "plus their OAS benefit has reached the ceiling based on their old wages. Every year they receive a letter from the federal government proudly announcing the adjustment of the OAS for inflation and then they receive a letter from the WSIB announcing that their workers' compensation benefits are being reduced by the amount that the OAS went up."

This means that these injured workers can never get any increase. There is no increase or adjustment for inflation for cost of living for these older, injured individuals. Their WSIB payments are clawed back anytime OAS is adjusted for inflation. Quite frankly, this is awful, and it is unfair. As we've heard today, this is the fourth time that this bill has been introduced in the Legislature. Our injured and targeted seniors and injured workers need this bill to pass—they needed this bill to pass years ago.

We support this bill. We commend the member from York South-Weston, and we applaud the commitment to fix this injustice. We hope that this will move quickly and take effect immediately to help people as soon as possible.

A bit of history, if I may: This specific issue stems from a change that happened in 1990. In 1990, the Ontario workers' compensation system changed from a permanent disability system to a wage loss system. Since that time and that change, there have been a number of discriminatory issues that have reared their ugly heads, and they do, in fact, all revolve around age.

A little sidestep here: My Bill 98, the Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act, seeks to address two separate but connected issues. Retirement and age should not preclude anyone from receiving fair compensation for occupational disease or injury. Part of my Bill 98 calls for a fair approach to determining benefits paid, specifically for an occupational disease. Someone diagnosed the day before retirement and someone diagnosed the day after should both be treated fairly. Many diseases and conditions take time to present and be diagnosed. The date of diagnosis shouldn't disqualify someone from receiving fair compensation.

Another issue when it comes to older workers diagnosed with occupational disease is that after their passing, unfortunately, surviving spouses are not entitled to receive a pension if someone dies of an occupational disease if they had been diagnosed post-retirement. These surviving spouses are only entitled to the Death Benefit, which is intended to cover funeral costs. They're condemned to living in poverty without their partner. Again, we come back to the point that age and retirement penalties are not fair and are contrary to the spirit of the WSIA.

Back to this bill specifically: I'm putting on my critic for pensions hat. I'd also like to take a look again at the

unfortunate case of Mr. Mauro, who, again, I'm pleased has joined us here today. I hope you're appreciating the debate today. I wonder if part of his story is also that he was never compensated for the loss of his CPP benefits, as well as suffering the unfairness of the benefits clawback tied to OAS increases, as, unfortunately, many older and injured workers are faced with.

So, again, back to Mr. McKinnon: As he explains, "The Canada Pension Plan is an earnings-based social program that provides benefits when a contributor to the plan retires or becomes disabled.

"Workers contribute a part of their gross wages to the Canada Pension Plan. In the future, they have entitlements to disability and retirement benefits based on their contributions and lifetime income. When you are unable to work due to a workplace injury or illness, all of this disappears without compensation."

As he further comments, "The solution will require amendments to both workers' compensation legislation and the Canada Pension Plan."

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has been talking—not just today—a lot about retirement security and dignity in retirement. Here is another chance for us to connect with this government's new federal partners and push to amend the CPP to fix the broken bits that we are identifying as unfair and harmful.

Seniors in vulnerable and challenging injured circumstances shouldn't be sitting ducks or seen by employer lawyers and the government to be easy targets. They should be fairly compensated for their loss and sacrifice and injury, and they should be protected and fairly treated. For crying out loud, this isn't news, so let's fix this. Not just one piece at a time—let's make it right; let's fix it all together.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, we support this bill. We applaud the member from York South-Weston. This bill needs to pass, but it must only be a part of the conversation about what is right, what is fair and what we can do and choose to fix, if we decide to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I only have a few minutes to speak. As the member from York South-Weston mentioned, this is now the fourth time this bill has been introduced in the Legislature.

We have a gentleman here whose name is Antonio Mauro. He was injured back in the 1980s, I believe it was. He got a permanent partial disability benefit from the Workers' Compensation Board. Then, a piece of legislation was passed in the 1990s—twice it was reduced. Basically, what it does is, he gets his partial disability benefit reduced every time the federal old age pension comes into place. So it's basically a clawback. It's unfair.

As we heard earlier, it's a matter of unfairness. It's a matter of what's socially just. In this case, he shouldn't be re-penalized every time the federal pension comes into being or increases. It's just not right. It's an emotional issue. Believe it or not, we're trying to speak about it

here in a non-emotional way. You get injured—people want to work—when you're young and you get your permanent partial disability benefit and then afterwards you find out it's being clawed back every time Old Age Security goes up. It's wrong. It needs to be fixed.

I hope that today after the debate finishes—I want to save time for other speakers. Every time this comes up, it's never solved. It's time to solve the problem, make the changes and make this into law and make Antonio Mauro's life, and the lives of the other people who are affected by this, more comfortable as they age and live the rest of their lives here in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to first commend the member from York South-Weston on her very passionate way for bringing this forward. I'm not going to talk about the technicalities. I think everybody brought them forward.

Mr. Mauro represents a whole generation of Italian Canadians and a lot of immigrants who came from Europe after the war who literally broke their backs building this country. They weren't working building houses; they were working building sewers, bridges and roads, and they literally broke their backs. You can hardly find a senior who lives in the Italian communities of Woodbridge, St. Clair or Eglinton who hasn't had a serious back injury because they literally worked like indentured labour when they came to Canada. It's not the great Canada we see today, where everybody loves multiculturalism and respects workers. No, they were treated like indentured labourers. They worked 10 or 12 hours a day, and then they were told, "If you don't come to work on Saturday, you don't come to work on Monday." That's what the situation was. Then, when they went to get paid, in many instances there was no paycheque, over and over again. These are the people who built the country and are just looking for a little bit of fairness here. That's what this bill represents.

1610

I remember this story I've been told that in the summertime, when they were working on road construction, there was no such thing as water for the workers. It wasn't allowed. You weren't allowed to have water on the construction site. Do you know where they used to get their water? They used to get their water from the cement truck that came by. That's the only water they could get.

This is what this bill represents. It represents those incredibly dedicated family men, mostly, and women who did the work at home and had jobs also that they got paid peanuts for. They basically severely injured themselves, and the compensation system is not fair to them.

I know people say, "The Conservatives say we can't do anything about this because of the unfunded liability." Well, the unfunded liability has now gone from \$24 billion down to \$8 billion, so it is improved. That's not an excuse anymore.

Also, the impact is very small financially because, unfortunately, there are very few Mr. Mauros left, because

most of them died. They died, many of them, because of the construction injuries they got no compensation from, and they suffered their whole life.

This is not about technical, lawyers, and names of bills. This is about doing something that's right for all these people who built this city and built this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I am particularly pleased to be able to stand here to talk about this bill, because I'm so delighted that the member from York South-Weston has brought this forward.

This is a testament to the kind of member that she is, that she goes out and looks after workers in her own riding. The great work that she did on Crown Cork and Seal and the very troubled strike situation they had in that organization—she went to bat for those people, not because Crown Cork is in her riding, but because workers in her community worked in that facility, and she went to bat for them.

What makes me very pleased to be here is that today she is fighting for a representative of my riding, Beaches-East York—Antonio Mauro. I'm absolutely delighted to see you here. You've come down to Queen's Park. You've been an advocate. You've been a great media spokesperson, Mr. Mauro, for this issue. As a representative and as a constituent of Beaches-East York, I commend you for your courage to come down here, notwithstanding the fact that your mobility is limited. You've come down with your fellows who have been working with you over the years to try to solve this problem.

Let's be very, very clear: Mr. Mauro earned his disability pension. He was injured in the workplace. Why we pay premium insurance into the WSIB is that if there is a tragic situation, whether it is an injury which stops an individual from being able to work, there is a compensation program in place. That compensation program was in place to put earnings back into his family, based on the earnings of the day. Then let's also be clear that as a senior over 65, he deserves the Old Age Security benefit. It is unconscionable that these two different funding schemes are operating in a way that is disinheriting him, disenfranchising him of what is justly due to him and his family.

The article we've spoken about, in the Toronto Star, talks at length about his wonderful wife who, because of his disability situation, worked tirelessly to assist the family, to put you on as firm a financial footing as you could be for your family growing up in Beaches-East York. She, too, should be totally commended for her hard work in ensuring that the family was well looked after.

Mr. Mauro is joined here by a number of other individuals, including Orlando Buonastella. I've just met Orlando for the first time today. He works on the Danforth, not far from where my constituency office is, working with the injured workers' compensation group. His office is in Toronto-Danforth, and I'm just a little bit further east. We'll get together and we'll talk about some

of the issues, because this is an issue, being new to this riding, I hadn't come across. The fact that this has been in front of us four times—it's somewhat like the tipping bill. The fourth time, we might get lucky, in order to bring a very important piece of legislation forward and get it approved.

It's just fantastic that the member for York South-Weston has once again shown leadership to represent the little guy, the little guy who needs government to stand up and support him and support his family and all injured workers who fall into this very narrow problem, this technicality whereby, between the provincial and the federal government schemes, they are being disenfranchised of what is justly due.

Congratulations, sir, for being here. We hope to get this accomplished as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. Further debate?

I now return to the member for York South-Weston. You have two minutes.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank all of the members who have taken the time to speak on this bill: the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, the member from London-Fanshawe, the member from Burlington, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the member from Oshawa, the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from Beaches-East York. I want to thank them for contributing to the debate going on today. Again, we've heard it over and over from many members.

To the concerns that were expressed by the Conservative side, I just want to say again that this supplement was intended for injured workers who would not benefit from job retraining and were not expected to go back to work. So the bill applies only to workers who were injured before 1990, who received a supplement for not being able to return to work and that is now being reduced, after age 65, by the calculation of integration of Old Age Security. I hope that they will take time to understand that.

I also want to thank the guests who are here. They are the real advocates of this bill. We have spoken about this to Antonio Mauro. He is an injured worker, and this current legislation affects him personally. He is 82 and has been waiting a long time for us to make this change.

I know that Orlando Buonastella has also been mentioned. He's from Injured Workers' Consultants. He has worked with Mr. Mauro tirelessly, bringing his story forward.

I want to thank Gino Cucchi, who was president of Comites. It's an organization that identifies and supports the needs of the Italian community. He has worked tirelessly as well.

I hope that everyone will support my bill. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to everyone else.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS
AMENDMENT ACT (MEETINGS
OF SHAREHOLDERS AND EXECUTIVE
COMPENSATION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS
(ASSEMBLÉES DES ACTIONNAIRES
ET RÉTRIBUTION DES MEMBRES
DE LA DIRECTION)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 76, standing in the name of Mr. Takhar.

Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 128, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act with respect to meetings of shareholders and the adoption of an executive compensation policy.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection: On division.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried on division.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to the committee—Mr. Takhar?

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move it to the general government committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested it be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

OPPORTUNITY IN THE SHARING
ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES POSSIBILITÉS
OFFERTES PAR L'ÉCONOMIE
DE PARTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 131, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend other Acts to regulate transportation network vehicles, to provide freedom for individual residential property owners to share their property for consideration with others and to deal with the expenses of public sector employees and contractors in that connection.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll deal with this vote at the end of private members' business.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT
(PERMANENT PARTIAL DISABILITY
SUPPLEMENTS), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(SUPPLÉMENT POUR INVALIDITÉ
PARTIELLE À CARACTÈRE PERMANENT)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Albanese has moved second reading of Bill 133, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 respecting permanent partial disability supplements.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”
In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carried on division.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—

Mrs. Laura Albanese: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

OPPORTUNITY IN THE SHARING
ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES POSSIBILITÉS
OFFERTES PAR L'ÉCONOMIE
DE PARTAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1621 to 1626.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can members please take their seats? Once you're in the hall, you've got to sit in your seat.

Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 131, An Act to enact two new Acts and to amend other Acts to regulate transportation network vehicles, to provide freedom for individual residential property owners to share their property for consideration with others and to deal with the expenses of public sector employees and contractors in that connection.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Anderson, Granville
Arnott, Ted
Ballard, Chris

Hunter, Mitzie
Kiwala, Sophie
Kwinter, Monte

Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.

Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Chan, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Dickson, Joe
Harris, Michael
Hoskins, Eric
 Hudak, Tim

MacLaren, Jack
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McNaughton, Monte
Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm

Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Oraziotti, David
Potts, Arthur
Qaadir, Shafiq
Scott, Laurie
Sousa, Charles
Vernile, Daiene

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bradley, James J.
Delaney, Bob

Dhillon, Vic
French, Jennifer K.
Natyshak, Taras

Singh, Jagmeet
Takhar, Harinder S.
Vanthof, John

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 32; the nays are 9.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—Mr. Hudak?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Committee on finance, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the finance committee. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? Seeing there are none, further debate? Further debate?

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This will be a 30-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have received a deferral notice. This vote will take place next Monday, after question period.

Second reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have no further business.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Don't worry; I have no complaints. I'm just very happy to introduce my father, Alex Gladstone, up in the members' gallery, before we all run out.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The minister has moved adjournment. All those in favour? All those opposed?

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1632.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London-Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket-Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora-Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East-Cooksville / Mississauga-Est-Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity-Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Attorney General / Procureure générale
		Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Whitby–Oshawa	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Sylwia Przedzicki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Sylwia Przedzicki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack McLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack McLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwitter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment / Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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